

Biden visits Philadelphia to highlight energy plan (Update)

21 April 2015, by Maryclaire Dale

The White House on Tuesday released a long-term energy plan designed to fight climate change, modernize power plants and find other ways to ensure the nation a steady supply of safe, clean energy.

Vice President Joe Biden in a visit to Philadelphia on Tuesday called the nation's infrastructure "incredibly outdated" and said it must be fixed to serve the nation's 21st century energy needs.

"Much of it was built decades ago, and can't handle today's demands," Biden said Tuesday at Peco Energy Co., which is using a \$200 million federal stimulus grant to help develop technology like smart meters to allow customers to monitor and reduce their usage.

The nation's energy workers are also aging, and many of them will be retiring within the next 10 years, Biden said. He spoke of the need for skilled workers trained in new energy technologies, who could enjoy steady, good-paying jobs. The domestic energy industry, with 1 million current workers, is poised to add another 1.5 million as the industry transforms, he said.

"These are middle-class jobs, jobs that used to exist at the turn of the 20th century in the steel industry, in the automobile industry," Biden said.

The U.S. has become the world's leading producer of oil and natural gas combined as its dependence on foreign oil declines, the White House report said. The review also found that electricity from solar sources has increased 20-fold since 2008, while the amount of wind energy produced has tripled.

Administration officials have been meeting with major utility firms, experts and other stakeholders to assess the nation's energy situation and analyze future needs.

"Responding to these trends and issues ... will require that we address the growing vulnerabilities posed by climate change, the evolving energy mix, cyber and physical threats, growing interdependencies, aging infrastructure, and workforce needs," the White House said in a press release Tuesday accompanying the report.

The challenges ahead include protecting energy plants from cyber and physical threats; moving liquid fuels and electricity from supply regions to demand centers; and preparing workers for 21st century jobs in energy industries, the report said.

Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz and John Holdren, policy director of the White House Office of Science and Technology, joined Biden in Philadelphia.

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