

Scranton Times Editorial

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New nuke era

Although the global summit on climate change at Copenhagen was a disappointment in that it did not produce a clear plan to cleaner air, it's apparent that no broad agreement is needed to drive cleaner energy production.

In the United States, the drive to develop alternative energy sources will continue, with vast new discoveries of natural gas joining the equation with wind, solar and other alternative sources. And it is entirely appropriate that the federal government soon will announce the first of \$18.5 billion in loan guarantees to begin the next era of nuclear power development in the United States.

The math is simple. Nuclear power is the only source that can produce massive amounts of power, on demand, without producing carbon emissions. It already produces about 20 percent of the nation's power through just 104 plants nationwide. Given that those plants are aging and that demand for electricity is expected to increase by 30 percent over the next 10 to 20 years, it is crucial to bring more nuke plants online.

Those demand projections do not include the prospect that development of fully electric vehicles over that same period could create exponentially more need for power.

No new plants have been constructed in the U. S. since the 1970s. Jump-starting the industry revival now also could play a major role in reviving the overall economy. Just the third plant planned to join the existing two reactors at PPL's nuclear site in Luzerne County, for example, would create about 4,000 construction jobs for between four and six years and 400 permanent positions at the plant.

Wind, solar and other forms of alternative energy all are needed. But expansion of carbon-free nuclear power is needed to ensure a reliable baseline upon which to cleanly diversify the nation's energy resources.