By: Roy York, Staff Member

On March 27, 2012, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a 257-page rule that forces new coal-fired power plants to emit the same amount of greenhouse gases as power plants that burn natural gas.
The proposed regulations would require new fossil fuel-fired power plants that produce more than 25 megawatts to meet an output-based standard of 1,000 pounds of CO2 per megawatt-hour. This standard is based on the performance of natural gas technology. The EPA stressed that these regulations only apply to new plants and would not affect existing plants. Further, the regulations would not apply to plants that will begin construction in the next 12 months.

The EPA said new natural gas electric plants would have no trouble meeting the new guidelines with existing technology, but coal-fired plants would need to implement new technology such as carbon capture to reduce their emissions below the threshold. This news has garnered reactions from environmental activists and coal supporters. Some have been critical of the political implications of the move, and have accused President Obama of wanting to end the use of coal in the United States.

Feedback on the document is requested within 60 days of the publication of the proposed rule, and the EPA will hold public hearings on the proposal within 60 days of the publication of the proposed rules. The EPA will make a final decision on the regulations later this year.

[4] Id.
[5] Id.