

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



December 2011

Draft PSD Permit for Pioneer Valley Energy Center Westfield, Massachusetts

What is a PSD Permit?

The Clean Air Act is a Federal law that protects our health and well-being from air pollution. When a company wants to build a new facility (such as a power plant) that would be a major source of air pollution, the company must get a permit first. This company needed two air permits. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection issued its air permit for this project on December 31, 2010. The Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has prepared this draft "Prevention of Significant Deterioration" (PSD) permit. A PSD permit is a Clean Air Act permit that makes sure the facility installs modern technology to reduce air pollution, and that it does not cause unhealthy levels of air pollution.

What is this project?

Pioneer Valley Energy Center plans to build a 431 Megawatt power plant on Ampad Road in Westfield, Massachusetts. The plant will mainly burn natural gas, and it will make enough electricity for about 300,000 homes. The plant will make much less air pollution than most plants in Western Massachusetts.

How does this affect me?

EPA's draft permit has two main parts. First, the power plant must use the "Best Available Control Technology" to limit its air pollution. The plant must burn mainly natural gas, which is the cleanest fossil fuel available for power plants. In addition, the plant must install special emission control equipment.

Second, the company used computer modeling programs to show that the power plant's air pollution will not harm air quality. This is important since unhealthy levels of air pollution can lead to an increase in asthma attacks. Right now, the Westfield area meets all of EPA's health-based standards except for ozone. The computer modeling shows that the Westfield area will still meet all of EPA's standards except ozone. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection air permit for this power plant addresses ozone.

This is a draft permit. Please give us your comments, either in writing or at the public hearing. After the comment period is over, we will write a "Response to Comments" and make our final decision.

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