More is Less: Environmentally Beneficial Electrification (EBE)

November 30, 2016

Based on Research by Keith Dennis, NRECA
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Key Take-Aways

1. EBE is key to meeting US and global GHG reduction goals
2. EBE may lead to scenarios where more electricity is used, but fewer overall GHG emissions are produced
3. The metrics we use are critical; "Emissions efficiency" will be as important as energy efficiency moving forward
4. Let's get started ASAP!

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Environmentally beneficial electrification: The dawn of 'emissions efficiency'☆,☆☆

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1. Introduction

The nature of the electricity grid is changing dramatically, as are our nation's environmental goals, so our policy thinking needs to change profoundly, too. Mounting research suggests that aggressive electrification of energy end uses – such as space heating, water heating, and transportation – is needed if the United States and the world are to achieve ambitious emission reduction goals for carbon dioxide. This concept, the electrification of energy end uses that have been powered by fossil fuels (natural gas, propane, gasoline, diesel, or fuel oil) in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, is called "environmentally beneficial electrification."[1]

Achieving the greenhouse gas emissions reductions possible through environmentally beneficial electrification will require routinely revisiting and updating prevailing energy efficiency metrics and accounting methodologies in order to maximize gains. Specifically, it is timely to consider whether reduced electricity consumption (i.e., kWh) is the optimal compass with which to navigate the path to a low-carbon future when, in fact, substitution of electricity for fossil fuels may in some cases *increase* electricity consumption.

Policy goals are shifting from the simple energy conservation focus of yesteryear toward achieving greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions. Therefore, we need to assess the GHG emissions associated with various ways to power end uses, as opposed to simply the number of kilowatt-hours consumed. To that end, we submit that "emissions efficiency"[2] may be as or more important than "energy efficiency" moving forward.

Beyond ensuring that our efficiency metrics and policies promote positive environmental outcomes and produce less CO_2, it is also imperative that they not create *disincentives* to achieving GHG emissions reductions through the electrification of loads that are less carbon-intensive than existing practices. Replacing a fuel oil heating system in a single-family residence with electric heat pump technology, for example, would typically reduce emissions, improve comfort, and save the owner money. But such replacements may not be encouraged under the Clean Power Plan (CPP) due to the statutory constraints the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) faces implementing it under section 111(d) of the federal Clean Air Act (CAA). This article expands upon environmentally beneficial electrification, introduces the concept of emissions efficiency, and considers how the design of the CPP could impede opportunities for environmentally beneficial electrification. Because environmentally beneficial electrification is necessary to achieve our nation's GHG emission reduction goals, states must find ways to encourage it. Notwithstanding the uncertain judicial future of the CPP at this time, several steps to boost environmentally beneficial electrification reflect "no regrets" strategies that should be encouraged and implemented even in the absence of a clear regulatory regime.

2. Growing consensus for environmentally beneficial electrification

Consensus is growing that meeting aggressive GHG reduction goals will require electrification of end uses such as space heating, water heating, and transportation. A recent report by Environmental and Energy Economics (E3) states that "critical to the success of long-term GHG goals" is "fuel-switching away from

☆As the U.S. works to meet carbon reduction goals, 'environmentally beneficial electrification' will be required. Rather than focusing solely on reducing energy consumption, we must generate electricity using more resources that emit little or no CO_2 and power more end uses with electricity. To this end, 'emissions efficiency' may be an important and effective metric for the electric sector moving forward.

☆☆This article and the opinions within are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinion of their respective organizations.

*Corresponding author.

[1] Dennis, K. 2015. "Environmentally Beneficial Electrification: Electricity as the End-Use Option." Electricity Journal 28(9): 100–112.

[2] The term "emiciency" could be used as a newly coined word and applied as a short-hand term for "emissions efficiency." Greater emissions efficiency reflects fewer emissions created per unit of useful output of an energy-consuming service. For example, fewer pounds of CO_2 emitted per mile traveled by a car or fewer pounds of CO_2 emitted per gallon of hot water provided by a water heater.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tej.2016.07.007

http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1040619016301075

Environmentally Beneficial Electrification: The Dawn of "Emissions Efficiency"

The Electricity Journal
September 1, 2016

What the heck is EBE, and what is "Emissions Efficiency"?

Introduction: What is "Environmentally Beneficial Electrification?"

The use of electricity in end-uses that would otherwise be powered by fossil fuels (natural gas, propane, fuel oil, or gasoline) to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.


RenewableEnergy
E-DRIVE 100

Growing Consensus for EBE

Lawrence Berkeley National Lab finds:

The key to meeting GHG goals is "*widespread electrification of passenger vehicles, building heating, and industry heating.*"

“Emissions Efficiency” (or “*Emiciency*”)

Why is EBE Possible Now?

1. Adoption of GHG reduction public policy goals
2. Declining electricity sector GHG emissions
3. Increased efficiency of end-use equipment
4. Technology advances in other sectors
5. Need for "flexiwatts" to integrate renewable energy

But current metrics, policies, and even conventional wisdom need to change in order to enable EBE…

We Have a History of Rapid Transformation

5th Avenue, NYC
Easter Parade, **1900**
See any automobiles?

Source: Tony Seba

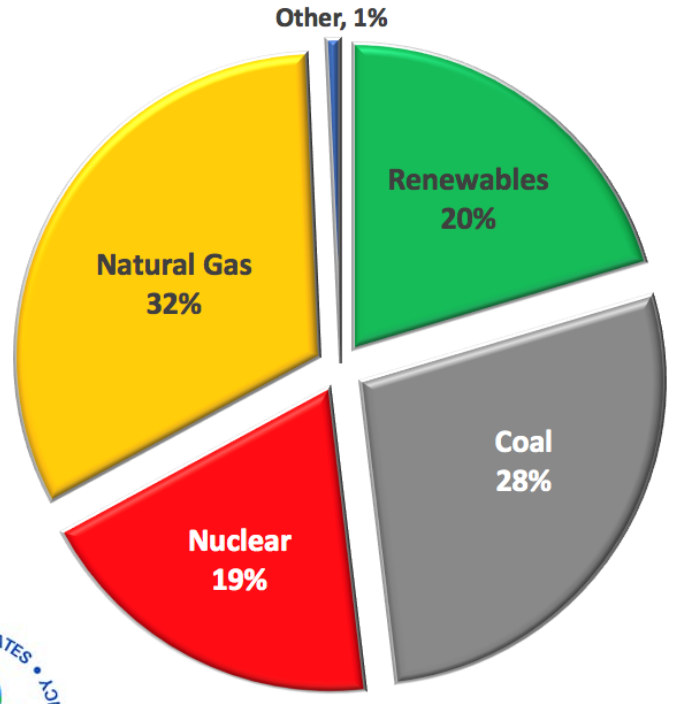
We Have a History of Rapid Transformation

Park Avenue, NYC
Easter, **1913**
See any horses?

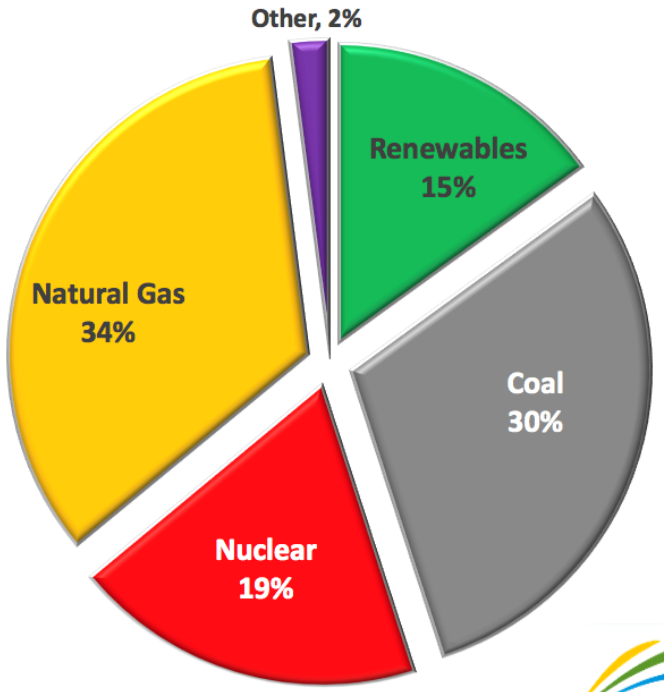
Source: Tony Seba

Rapidly Changing Electricity Fuel Mix

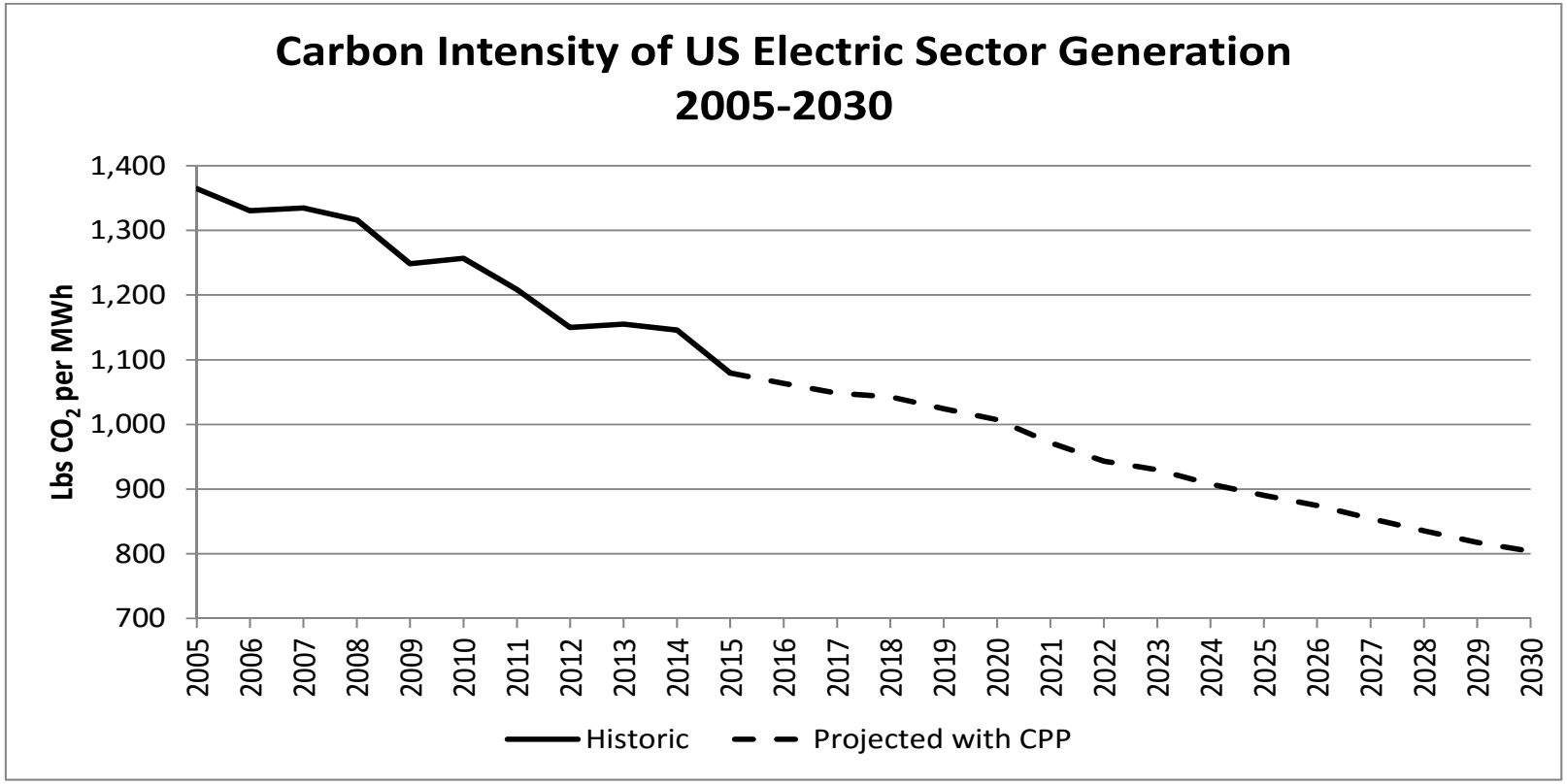
Projected 2030 Electricity Generation Mix Under the Clean Power Plan



Today's Electricity Generation Mix (August 2016, EIA)



Why Metrics are Critical



While the energy efficiency of devices will not change once installed, the ***emissions efficiency*** (or "***emiciency***") will improve over time

Metrics Matter!

- Emissions Efficiency ("Emiciency"):
  - Greater emissions efficiency reflects fewer emissions created per unit of useful output of an energy-consuming service.
  - For example, fewer pounds of CO2 emitted per mile traveled by a car or fewer pounds of CO2 emitted per gallon of hot water provided by a water

- Three examples from *The Electricity Journal* paper illustrate the importance of aligning metrics and accounting practices with policy goals...

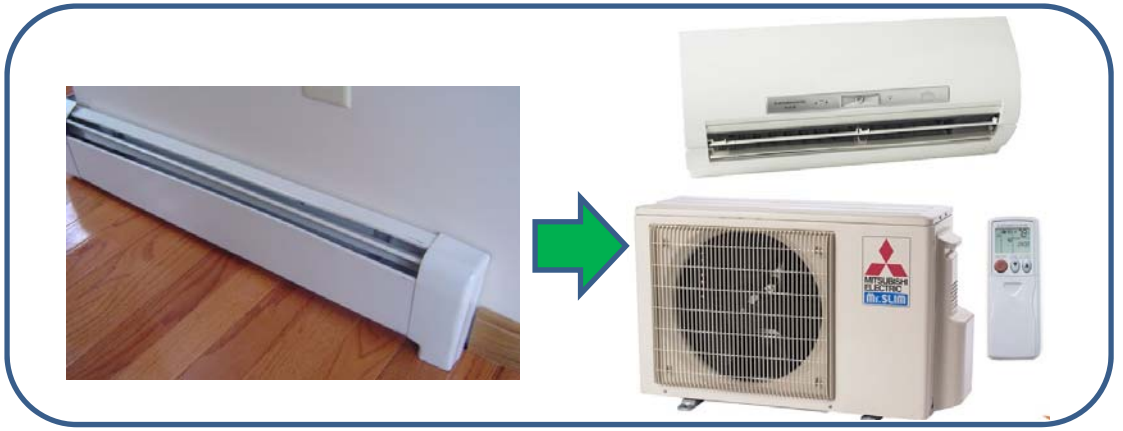
Illustrative Example Hypothetical Utility with 100,000 consumers;

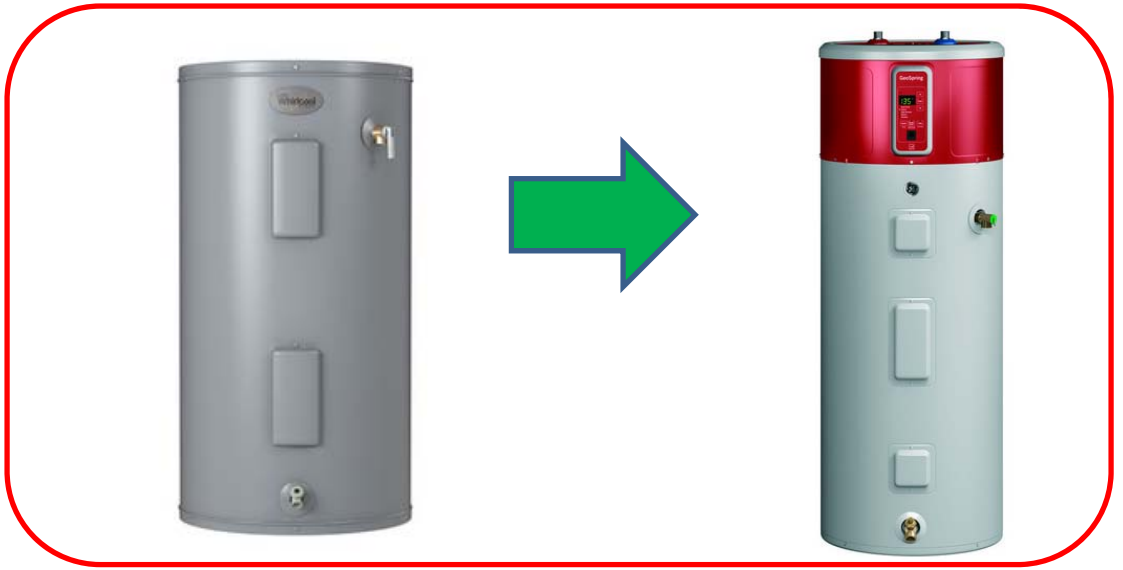
50% Gas; 50% Coal

Summary Data	Pre Shift	
With 50% Coal, 50% Gas	**0.715 tons/MWh**	
Space Heat	Number	Emissions
Oil	20,000	111,297
Propane	10,000	54,998
Electric Resistance	30,000	303,582
Electric Heat Pump	20,000	80,952
Natural gas	20,000	108,468
Subtotal	100,000	659,297
Water Heat		
Propane	30,000	48,920
Electric Resistance	49,000	137,127
Electric Heat Pump	1,000	1,063
Natural Gas	20,000	23,985
Subtotal	100,000	211,095
Vehicles		
Electricity	10	14
Gasoline	179,990	475,346
Diesel	20,000	59,358
Subtotal	200,000	534,719
Total Emissions @ 50% Coal 50% Gas		**1,405,111**

Step 1: Implement Efficiency

Convert most electric space and water heat to heat pumps

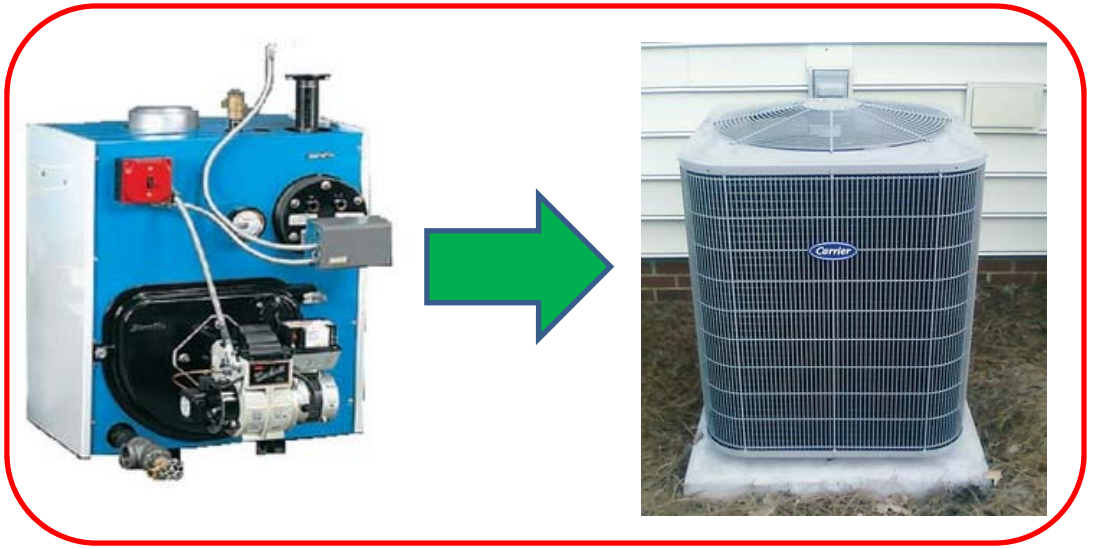


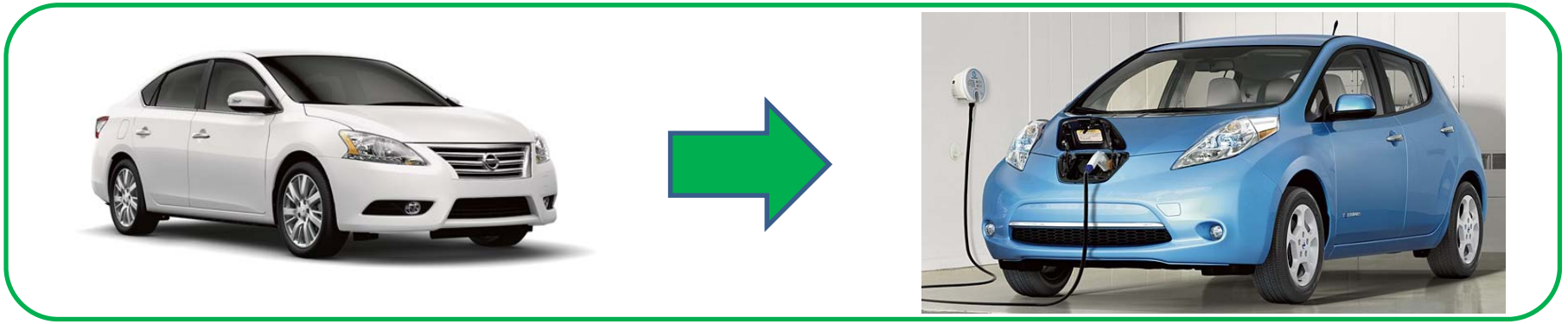


Result after Step 1

Summary Data	Pre Shift		Post Shift	
With 50% Coal, 50% Gas	0.715 tons/MWh			
Space Heat	Number	Emissions	Number	Emissions
Electric Resistance	30,000	303,582	10,000	101,194
Water Heat				
Electric Resistance	49,000	137,127	10,000	27,985

Step 2:
Use Efficiency Dividend for Fuel Conversions

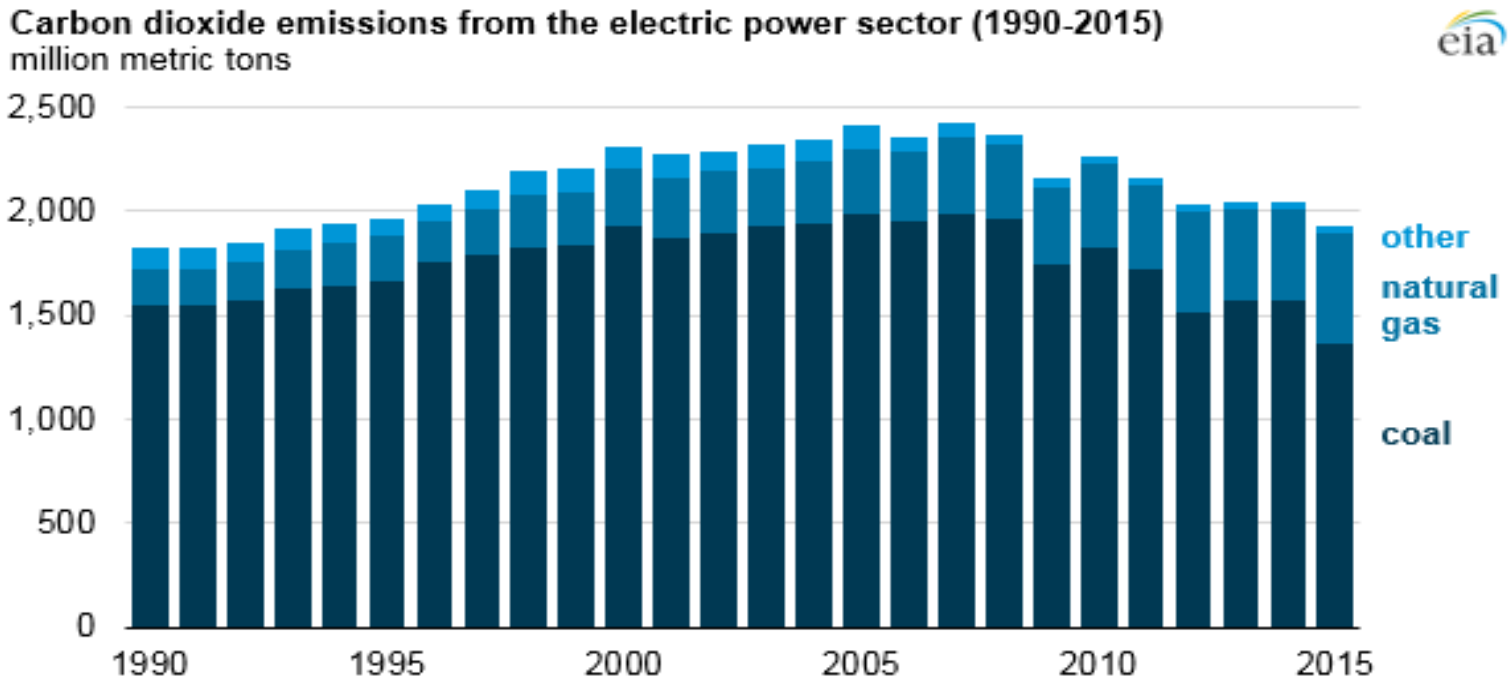




Result after Step 2

Summary Data	**Pre Shift**		**Post Shift**	
With 50% Coal, 50% Gas	**0.715 tons/MWh**			
Space Heat	Number	Emissions	Number	Emissions
Subtotal	100,000	659,297	100,000	508,549
Water Heat				
Subtotal	100,000	211,095	100,000	130,709
Vehicles				
Subtotal	200,000	534,719	200,000	466,869
Total Emissions @ 50% Coal 50% Gas		**1,405,111**		**1,106,127**
Change				**-21%**

CO2 Accounting and Emissions Efficiency



- Electric sector CO2 at ~1993 levels (1st half 2016 = 1991!)
- With ~2.5% per year GDP growth
- 890 billion kWh more today than 1993; enough to power all 253 million vehicles run by gasoline and diesel in US today!

Incremental "Emiciency" Factor

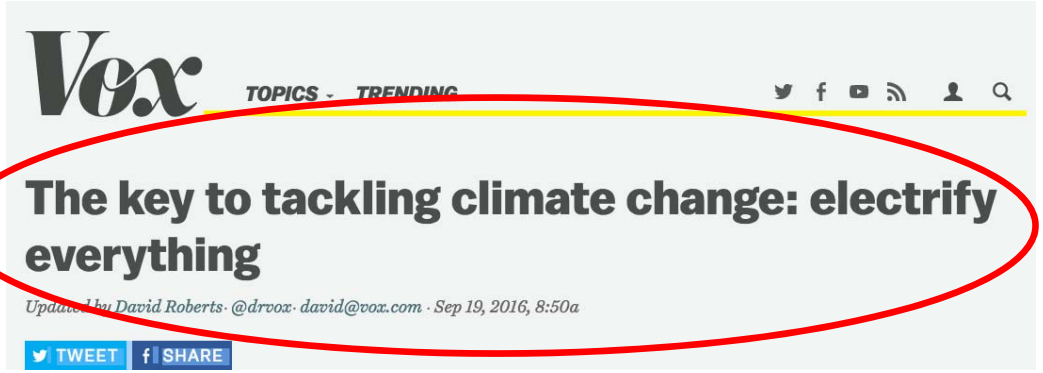
Type	New Capacity (GW)	2015 Average Capacity Factor	Estimated Generation (MWh)	Emissions Rate (Short Tons/MWh)	Emissions (Short Tons)
Solar	9.50	28.6%	23,800,920	0.00	0.00
Natural Gas	8.00	56.3%	39,455,040	0.45	17,754,752
Wind	6.80	32.5%	19,359,600	0.00	0.00
Nuclear	1.10	92.2%	8,884,392	0.00	0.00
Petroleum and Other	0.30	1.3%	34,164	1.08	37,068
Hydro	0.30	35.9%	943,452	0.00	0.00
Total	**26.00**	**40.6%**	**92,477,568**	**0.19**	**17,791,820**

- EIA: More than 26 gigawatts of generating capacity will be added in 2016, mostly from renewables and natural gas
- Emission rate of new generation is very low

There is a path to zero-carbon electricity. …

The same cannot yet be said of combustion fuels.

- *David Roberts,* Vox, *Sept 19, 2016*



Vox TOPICS TRENDING

The key to tackling climate change: electrify everything

Updated by David Roberts · @drvox · david@vox.com · Sep 19, 2016, 8:50a

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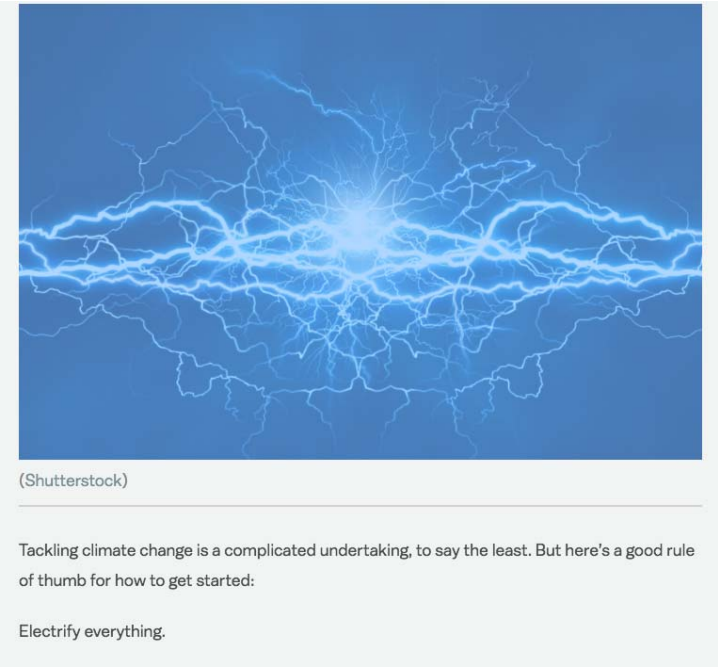

(Shutterstock)

Tackling climate change is a complicated undertaking, to say the least. But here's a good rule of thumb for how to get started:

Electrify everything.

“No Regrets” Next Steps

1. DOE and EPA should update the “source” energy factor

2. GHG accounting should recognize that the emissions intensity of the grid is changing with time

3. Electrification projects should account for impacts that result from displaced direct combustion of fossil fuel

4. “Emissions efficiency” should be considered in addition to energy efficiency (i.e., kWh saved) as a metric for projects targeting GHG emissions reductions

EBE Conclusions

1. Key to meeting US and global GHG reduction goals
2. More electricity will be used, but fewer overall GHG emissions produced
3. Metrics are critical; "Emissions efficiency" (or "*emiciency*") as important as energy efficiency moving forward
4. Need to get started ASAP!

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