Byron Generating Station Celebrates 4,500 Consecutive Days of Carbon-Free Nuclear Power Production & 45th Anniversary

Exelon Generation nuclear plant has produced the carbon-free energy equivalent to removing 2.5 million cars from Illinois roads every year.

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BYRON, Ill. — Today the Byron Generating Station in Northern Illinois is celebrating an impressive 4,500 consecutive days producing carbon-free energy for Illinois and beyond, while also marking 45 years on site. Employees, retirees and local leaders will be on hand today for a 1 p.m. cake cutting to mark the occasion. Oregon’s own O’s Bakery has designed an incredible edible replica of the plant for the occasion.

Construction work started at the Exelon Generation location in Byron in 1975, with the Unit 1 reactor coming online in 1985 and Unit 2 in 1987. Nuclear reactors like the ones at the dual-unit Byron Station are very reliable, running around the clock. Every 18 months, operators shut down a reactor for only few weeks to support refueling and maintenance. Over the past 13 years, when one reactor shut down for maintenance, the other unit stayed online allowing the facility to continuously provide electricity to the region. The nuclear plant’s 700-plus workforce prides itself on precision monitoring and maintenance programs, which help the plant sustain its status as a model of reliability.

The plant generates enough carbon-free electricity to power more than 2.3 million homes and businesses while preventing the release of nearly 12 million metric tons of carbon dioxide annually. Over the lifetime of both units’ operation, that’s the equivalent of taking approximately 2.5 million cars off of the road every year.

“Clean power-generating facilities like Byron Station are on the front lines of combatting climate change,” said Byron Station Site Vice President Mark Kanavos. “Americans want carbon-free electricity, which our nuclear plants deliver to millions every day. They also want reliability, and nuclear plants are the unquestioned champion of reliable electricity production in this country.”

The average nuclear plant in the United States operated at full power about 92 percent of the time of 2019. On average, Exelon’s nuclear plants ran at full power more than 95 percent of the year. Byron Station topped the company’s and country’s average run time by operating at full power more than 96.9 percent of the time in 2019. The always-on aspect of nuclear power isn’t lost on its residents.

“Living in this area my whole life, I can attest to the importance of the station for both its important part in electricity distribution and its positive effect on the economy,” said Sarah Downs, executive director of the Byron Area Chamber of Commerce. “When one reactor goes offline for a maintenance project, there’s still a positive outcome as local businesses see a big uptick in sales. With hundreds of contractors temporarily staying in the area during scheduled projects, our business owners are staffing up — with some even extending their workforces until we get off grid again.”
Byron Generating Station is in Ogle County, Ill., about 20 miles southwest of Rockford. With both units at full power, the site produces almost 2,500 megawatts, enough electricity to power more than 2.3 million average American homes.