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Article: AmerenUE Introduces the "Pure Power" Program  
By Jeffrey Tomich

AmerenUE, which generates most of its electricity from coal-fired power plants, is giving its 1.2 million Missouri customers a "greener" option for powering their homes and businesses.

Customers won't buy wind or solar energy directly from Ameren. The "Pure Power" program announced Monday by the St. Louis-based utility will enable customers to pay extra on their monthly electric bills to help fund renewable energy development—at least some of which would be in the Midwest.

"You can feel like the energy that you consume is being met with renewable resources," Thomas Voss, AmerenUE's chief executive, said in an interview.

The program would cost homeowners and small-business customers 1.5 cents per kilowatt-hour, meaning a household that uses an average of 1,000 kilowatt-hours a month would pay an extra \$15. Larger businesses will be able to buy 1,000 kilowatt-hour blocks of "green power" at the same rate.

This is the first time that Ameren has offered its customers an opportunity to support renewable energy development. Missouri regulators approved the program as part of the \$43 million rate increase granted to Ameren last month.

Under the program, at least half of the renewable energy purchased by Ameren will be generated in Missouri and Illinois. The money will only support renewable energy developed after 2002 and 75 percent of it will go to wind generation, the utility said. Ameren hopes at least 2 percent of customers will enroll.

While not a perfect substitute for development of wind farms and other renewable resources, the Ameren program should help replace electric generation from fossil fuels and represents "a step in the right direction," said Erin Noble of the Missouri Coalition for the Environment.

Ameren signed a five-year agreement with 3 Phases Energy, a renewable energy marketer, to run the Pure Power program.

San Francisco-based 3 Phases will open a St. Louis office by August, said the Gabe Petlin, the company's director of regulatory affairs and carbon markets. The company will market the Pure Power program this summer, and Ameren will begin enrolling customers on its website today.

AmerenUE operates a couple of small hydroelectric plants in Missouri, which are being expanded. The utility also has committed to adding 100 megawatts of wind power to its generating fleet by 2010 but hasn't decided whether it will build turbines or buy capacity, Voss said. That's less a tenth of the output of the Callaway nuclear plant.