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PSNH: Nearly all mercury emissions removed

Test results show 98 percent reduction

By [Tricia L. Nadolny / Monitor staff](#)

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The Merrimack Station's scrubber is removing about 98 percent of mercury emissions, according to Public Service of New Hampshire officials who called the numbers the first true read on the project's success since it went online last September.

While the company has been able to measure sulfur dioxide reductions from the scrubber through a continual monitoring system, similar technology for mercury is not available, according to PSH spokesman Martin Murray. PSH hired The Air Compliance Group, an independent firm, to test mercury emissions at the coal-burning plant in January and again last month.

The results show between 97 and 98 percent mercury reductions, according to a recent PSH progress report filed with the Public Utilities Commission. Murray said the reading puts PSH well beyond the 80 percent mercury reduction set by the state Legislature when it mandated the wet flue gas desulfurizatoin system, also known as a scrubber, in 2006.

"We certainly believe that this level of reduction began when the scrubber began operating in late September but we weren't able to actually measure it to confirm that reduction until early this year," Murray said.

The progress report also noted a sulfur reduction of up to 98 percent, beyond the 90 percent goal set by the company.

Environmental groups have remained critical of the project and yesterday Cathy Corkery, director of the Sierra Club's state chapter, said she wanted to see the Department of Environmental Services review PSH's numbers before coming to any conclusions.

"I want to believe them. I think it would be exciting. That's what we want, less mercury, not more," she said. "But before I get out the champagne, I would like to see those numbers reviewed."

Corkery also called the state's mandate of 80 percent mercury reduction low for industry standards, saying the possible reductions are impressive compared to the modest benchmark.

According to PSNH, the project is anticipated to reach completion in June after a secondary wastewater treatment system is finished. The company has also reported the project will come in \$35 million under budget at a total cost of \$422 million.

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