

Local landfills convert methane gas into electricity

by: **Katie Walls** Updated: Jul 22, 2016 - 11:03 PM

WSB-TV 2 - Atlanta

GWINNETT COUNTY, Ga. —

Your garbage can generate electricity. It sounds futuristic, but it's happening right now in the metro area.

Channel 2 Action News was there when Mas Energy and Republic Services unveiled three landfill-gas-to-energy plants in the metro this week. The largest is in Buford, with two others in Winder and Griffin.

As trash breaks down, it releases methane gas into the atmosphere. The three plants capture that methane gas and convert it into electricity.

Together the three generate enough energy to power nearly 16,000 homes.

Commissioner Tim Echols with the Georgia Public Service Commission saw the value in having such facilities and pushed for their financing.

"We look way out into the future to make sure that the energy portfolio is balanced here in our state, and probably the most important thing to us is keeping rates low," Echols told Severe Weather team 2 meteorologist Katie Walls.

Georgia Power's Renewable Resources Project Manager, William Houser, said customers are already seeing those lower rates.

"I can tell you now, it's helping now today. When this facility came online, it's actually putting lower pressure on our rates," Houser said.

Harnessing the methane released in landfills means less carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere that would have otherwise been generated by burning fossil fuels, like coal.

Metro Atlanta's three new plants generate 24.1 megawatts of energy, preventing carbon dioxide emissions equivalent to burning 6,427 railcars worth of coal.



Three new landfill gas-to-energy plants were unveiled this week. © 2016 Cox Media Group.

Georgia Power has been slowly transitioning away from fossil fuels toward renewable energy. Unlike solar or wind energy, energy from landfill gas is not dependent on the weather.

“I can take a whiff and smell a little trash here, but we’re taking that gas that comes right out of that big pile and piping it right in here to this building and we’re generating electricity. You talk about sustainable. That’s sustainable,” Echols said.

Jason Byars with Mas Energy gave Channel 2 Action News a tour of the plant, and explained that sound-proofing was essential, considering the close proximity of neighborhoods to each plant.

“Our goal is to operate such that our neighbors really don’t know that we’re here. We want to be as quiet and environmentally benign as we can possibly be,” Byars said.

The facilities are estimated to pay for themselves in three to five years.

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View the news presentation at <http://www.wsbtv.com/news/local/gwinnett-county/local-landfills-convert-methane-gas-into-electricity/409682695>