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Exclusive-White House to support new nuclear power plants in the U.S.

 REUTERS

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By Nichola Groom and Trevor Hunnicutt

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The White House on Wednesday plans to announce new measures to support the development of new U.S. nuclear power plants, a large potential source of carbon-free electricity the

government says is needed to combat climate change.

The suite of actions, which weren't previously reported, are aimed at helping the nuclear power industry combat rising security costs and competition from cheaper plants powered by [natural gas](#), wind and solar.

Nuclear proponents say the technology is critical to providing large, uninterrupted supplies of emissions-free power to serve soaring electricity demand from data centers and electric vehicles and still meet President Joe Biden's goal of decarbonizing the U.S. economy by 2050.

"In the decisive decade for climate action, we need to pull as many of the tools for decarbonization off the sidelines and onto the field," said Ali Zaidi, Biden's national climate adviser.

Critics worry about the buildup of radioactive waste stored at plants around the country and warn of the potential risks to human health and nature, especially with any accidents or malfunctions. Biden signed a law earlier this month banning the use of enriched uranium from Russia, the world's top supplier.

At a White House event on Wednesday focused on nuclear energy deployment, the Biden administration will announce a new group that will seek to identify ways to mitigate cost and schedule overruns in plant construction.

The group of climate, science and energy policy experts from White House and Department of Energy will work with project developers, engineering, procurement and construction firms, utilities, investors, labor organizations, academics, and non-governmental organizations.

It also said the Army will soon solicit feedback on deploying advanced reactors to provide energy for certain facilities in the United States. Small modular reactors and microreactors can provide energy that is more resilient to physical and cyber attacks, natural disasters and other challenges, the White House said.

The Department of Energy also released a paper outlining the expected increased safety of advanced reactors. And a new tool will help developers figure out how to cut capital costs for new nuclear reactors.

The youngest U.S. nuclear power reactors, at the Vogtle plant in Georgia, were years behind schedule and billions over budget when they entered commercial operation in 2023 and 2024. No new U.S. nuclear plants are currently being built.

Vogtle is now the largest U.S. source of clean energy, the White House said.

Nuclear energy accounts for about 19% of U.S. power generation, compared with 4% for solar and 10% for wind.



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