Environmental responsibility is a core value of Progress Energy. Our company is committed to excellence in our environmental practices and performance.

The Asheville Plant is an industry leader in implementing new technologies to control emissions.

As part of the 2002 North Carolina Clean Smokestacks Act, Progress Energy will invest $190 million to reduce emissions from the Asheville Plant.

By 2009, the Asheville Plant will reduce nitrogen oxides (NOx) by 93 percent, compared to 1996 levels. The plant will reduce sulfur dioxides (SO2) by 93 percent, compared to 2001 emissions.

The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources estimates that pollution controls installed for SO2 will also decrease statewide mercury emissions by 65 percent.

The most visible change at the Asheville Plant is the construction of flue gas desulfurization units – or scrubbers.


Part of the installation process involved the construction of a 328-foot-tall stack.

As coal is burned in a power plant, it emits flue gas. Scrubbers work by taking the flue gas and passing it through a tower in which a water and limestone mixture is sprayed. The SO2 in the flue gas reacts with the limestone to produce gypsum, a useful additive to concrete or for the production of wallboard. The remaining water vapor rises from the stack.

The visibility of the water vapor depends on weather conditions – the more humid it is, the more visible the vapor.

While the water vapor rising from the new stack at the Asheville Plant is more visible than in previous years, the clouds it forms represent a breakthrough in clean air for the region.

In addition, the plant installed a selective catalytic reduction unit (SCR) in 2006, and a second SCR is planned for 2007. SCRs remove nitrogen oxides (NOx).

When all the improvements are complete, the Asheville Plant will be among the cleanest coal-burning power plants in the country.