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Ga. Tech study touts energy efficiency

Atlanta Business Chronicle - by [Dave Williams](#) Staff Writer

Georgia and other Southern states could avoid the expense and environmental impacts of building more coal-fired power plants during the next decade by putting more emphasis on energy efficiency, researchers from **Georgia Tech** reported Monday.

Aggressive development of economically viable energy efficient technologies throughout the region could reduce energy consumption in 2020 by 9 percent below projected levels, according to a study released by the School of Public Policy at Tech's Ivan Allen College.

That would bring energy use down to slightly less than present levels, thus avoiding the need to build additional electric generating capacity, including coal-burning plants, said Marilyn Brown, the report's coauthor.

"Too often, debates on new plant construction focus on cost-effectiveness and health impacts, while ignoring the benefits that could occur by rethinking policies on the demand side of the equation," she said. "This study ... reminds us that the cleanest, most cost-effective power plant is the one that need not be built."

The study found that the South accounts for 44 percent of the nation's energy consumption, considerably more than the region's population share of 37 percent.

"The South has been one of the last regions in the country to embrace energy efficiency programs and to develop an energy-efficiency culture of consumer behavior," the report states.

The research, which combined results from 19 studies conducted across the South during the past dozen years, was funded by the **Energy Foundation** and the **Turner Foundation**.

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