

FirstLight Power Resources Waterbury Generation Project

Frequently Asked Questions on Plant Operations

Why is there a plume around the plant when it operates in cold weather?

The plume that can be visible at times is from the plant's cooling tower and is not from the exhaust stack. This state-of-the-art plant cools the air that is used to create power to increase the efficiency of the plant. This air is cooled in a heat exchanger and the heat that is removed evaporates water in the plant's cooling tower. The plume that is seen from time to time when the plant is running is this water vapor.

What is in the plume?

The plume is city water that is being evaporated in the cooling tower. This is not part of the combustion process in the combustion turbine and contains no pollutants.

Why is the plume denser at times?

Air can absorb different amounts of moisture at various temperatures. When the air is cooler and has more moisture in it, the plume will be denser. When there is snow or rain in the air the plume will also be less buoyant and will tend to be closer to the ground. In hotter temperatures and on dry days, the plume will be higher in the air and less visible.

Why can't we see a plume from the plant stack?

When the plant is running, the exhaust gas from the plant is very hot. The hot gas is dispersed in the atmosphere before it cools enough to display any visible water vapor.

How do we know if there is a natural gas leak?

Any gas leak at the site will be accompanied with a loud noise of high pressure gas escaping and the distinct smell of natural gas. Gas consumption is remotely monitored by Yankee Gas and they know when the plant is in operation. Any large leaks will be immediately recognized by Yankee Gas through their monitoring system and the line shut down.

What should we do if we smell natural gas?

If natural gas odor is detected, call Yankee Gas at their emergency gas leak reporting line, 1-800-992-3427.

When does the plant run?

The ISO-New England, which is the organization that directs the operation of all power plants in New England, determines when the Waterbury generator is to run in order to maintain a reliable power supply and to minimize power costs.