

Amazon Is Going Nuclear, Joining Big Tech in the Race for More Power: 'There's Not Going to Be Enough Wind and Solar to Meet Needs'

Amazon's path to net-zero carbon continues as the company announced Wednesday that it has agreed "to support the development" of several nuclear energy projects.

"Nuclear is a safe source of carbon-free energy that can help power our operations and meet the growing demands of our customers while helping us progress toward our Climate Pledge commitment to be net-zero carbon across our operations by 2040," said Matt Garman, CEO of Amazon Web Services (AWS), in a statement.

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The new agreement includes building advanced SMRs (small modular reactors) in Washington State, which will be "constructed, owned, and operated by Energy Northwest" with the capability of generating enough energy to power the equivalent of 770,000 homes. It's also expected to create at least 1,000 temporary construction jobs, according to Energy Northwest.

What Is an SMR?

An SMR is an advanced “small modular reactor” with a power capacity of about one-third of a traditional nuclear power reactor, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency. SMRs can produce a large amount of low-carbon electricity.

“We see the need for gigawatts of power in the coming years, and there’s not going to be enough wind and solar projects to be able to meet the needs, and so nuclear is a great opportunity,” Garman told CNBC. “Also, the technology is really advancing to a place with SMRs where there’s going to be a new technology that’s going to be safe, and that’s going to be easy to manufacture in a much smaller form.”

Amazon also announced an agreement with utility company Dominion Energy in Virginia “to explore the development of an SMR project” near Dominion’s existing North Anna nuclear power station and previously signed an agreement with Talen Energy’s nuclear facility in Pennsylvania, which will directly power Amazon data centers “with carbon-free energy.”

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Big Tech Is Going Nuclear

Other Big Tech companies have recently announced nuclear deals. Three Mile Island, a nuclear power plant that’s been closed for five years, is set to reopen by 2028 to power Microsoft’s data centers. Google, meanwhile, signed an agreement on Monday to buy nuclear energy from engineering company Kairos Power by 2030.

[embedded content]

Amazon also recently announced that it “matched all of the electricity consumed by our global operations with 100%

renewable energy”—seven years ahead of its original 2030 goal.

“One of the fastest ways to address climate change is by transitioning our society to carbon-free energy sources, and nuclear energy is both carbon-free and able to scale—which is why it’s an important area of investment for Amazon,” Garman said. “Our agreements will encourage the construction of new nuclear technologies that will generate energy for decades to come.”

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