

INSIDE DOE

**EIA seen needing budget increase to track changing energy interests**

Jessica Marron

469 words

13 April 2009

Inside Energy

11

ISSN: 1556-3928

English

(c) 2009 McGraw-Hill, Inc.

With numerous biofuel, renewable and other green initiatives coming to the forefront in a short span of time, the Energy Information Administration needs a bigger budget and more resources to improve the quality and timeliness of the energy data it provides, participants in an EIA conference said last week.

"It's not that they haven't tried" to gather all of the information that the public and regulators need, Jeff Genzer, a partner at law firm Duncan, Weinberg, Genzer & Pembroke, said at the EIA 2009 Annual Energy Conference in Washington. "They don't have the resources."

Suggesting EIA needs an annual budget of at least \$145 million to support its mission, Genzer, who is the general counsel for the National Association of State Energy Officials, said regulators' ability to determine future demand or infrastructure needs "depends on the best energy data. We don't have that now."

Congress provided EIA with \$111 million in fiscal 2009, an increase from the \$95.5 million that the agency received last year. Some lawmakers recently also called for more funding for EIA (related story, p. 4).

Although the US is moving increasingly toward renewable-energy resources, the shortfall in detailed and timely EIA data makes it difficult for analysts to determine where these and other green fuels will fit into the future supply picture, said Philip Hanser, an analyst with The Brattle Group. In particular, EIA data on energy efficiency is "erratic" and "not well organized," he said.

Another area where sufficient data is sorely lacking is ethanol, speakers said. Frank Rusco, director of the Government Accountability Office's Natural Resources and Environment division, said EIA does not break out "how and where [ethanol] is splashed into the gasoline supply. That would be useful data to have."

The Association of Oil Pipelines' president, Shirley Neff agreed, adding that EIA does not offer information on where the bulk of flex-fuel or E-85 vehicles are located, thus making it difficult to determine where additional ethanol-related infrastructure will be needed in the future.

Further, Neff and other speakers said EIA needs to beef up its surveys of the US power industry and begin to break out information on restructured and non-restructured markets. "We have a system that does not fit into a neat, national model," and that makes it difficult for lawmakers to draft energy policies related to power generation, Neff said.

In addition, Rusco said the lack of detailed information makes it difficult to understand how well wholesale power markets are working.

EIA's Margot Anderson, director of its office of Energy Markets and End Use, acknowledged the agency's shortcomings, saying she is "not sure the current way is going to get us there."