

Waste not: SECCRA Power converts waste into energy

■ The new station harnesses landfill gas to produce electricity

By J.D. Samuel

Southeastern Chester County Refuse Authority (SECCRA) celebrated the opening of its \$2.3 million electrical plant on Jan. 30.

The facility, SECCRA Power, uses waste byproduct to produce "green" energy.

"Today we launch SECCRA Power," said SECCRA's Chairman Richard Cairns. "We are already making plans to add a second generator."

Part of the \$2.3 million SECCRA has invested in the facility includes a \$500,000 grant from the Pennsylvania

Energy Development Agency.

The project includes a new gas-collection system in the landfill, a generator that runs on landfill gas, a power line connection to the grid and an electronic monitoring system, according to a press release.

SECCRA is "entering a new phase," Cairns said. "What was once a nuisance gas is now a resource." Cairns gave credit to "forwarding thinking and willingness to pursue new ideas" for the facility's success.

Rachel Goldstein, regional manager of the Landfill Methane Outreach Program of

the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency spoke about the facility's potential to help businesses and the environment. There is a potential for creating hundreds more power plants from landfill gas, she said.

"Congratulations on a successful project," Goldstein said.

Bill Stullken, SECCRA's general manager, introduced the event and speakers to a packed audience. After the speeches the generator fired up for a demonstration.

When trash decomposes naturally at the landfill it creates methane gas that has a strong unpleasant odor. Instead of burning the gas from the waste to eradicate its odor, the SECCRA Power plant burns

the gas inside its generator, where it can harness the gas's energy.

It will generate nearly 1 megawatt of electricity on a continuous basis for selling on the Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland power grid, according to a press release. That's roughly the amount of electricity it takes to run 530 homes.

The electrical power is generated from a 16-cylinder engine similar to that which powers trains and yachts, said Scott Mengle, administrative supervisor for SECCRA.

"It's another huge step for this part of the county," said Chester County Commissioner Pat O'Donnell.

"We're just fascinated,"



Photo by J.D. Samuel

During a ceremony on Jan. 30, Rachel Goldstein, regional manager of the Landfill Methane Outreach Program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, starts the SECCRA Power generator for a public demonstration as SECCRA Construction Engineer Al Roman looks on.

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said Chester County Commissioner Carol Aichele. "This is a resource that's always been here...I'm glad this landfill is on the cutting edge."

Once the generator was installed, SECCRA administrators realized that the landfill was producing enough methane gas to run an addi-

tional engine. As a result, SECCRA plans to install the second generator sometime this year, Mengle said.