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Can any of you nice people give me advice please: **I am looking for energy-related field trips for my middle school students.** We are in Texas, so we can go to a refinery; there is also an offshore rig museum. I am wondering if any of you have taken your students, or went yourselves to a windmill farm? Is there anything to see besides windmills themselves? Are there actually any people working there? Are there any alternative energy places that you might have visited? Anyone have been to a nuclear power plant - do they let people visit?

I would appreciate any thoughts on this matter.

Thanks in advance,
Olga Jankowski
Houston

Olga,

I'd call your local energy utility and ask if they have any suggestions. I'm not that familiar with Texas, but here's what I've visited in CA:
* geothermal energy plant
* pumped energy storage reservoir (water pumped into it at night when "excess" energy on grid, generators "recover" energy during days when it is needed).

Also, are there any tidal energy stations? (I Googled tidal energy Texas and got some interesting results.)

Good luck!

If you can get to the San Antonio area, the Covell Gardens Landfill just began producing energy from trash about a year ago. Approximately 60,000 homes receive their electricity from methane produced in the landfill that is converted to energy. It is a wonderful process that is full of chemistry and physics concepts.

Carole Henry
San Antonio, TX

From: Deena Gould <dnamartin@cox.net>
Date: February 24, 2007 10:20:08 AM MST
To: Olga Jankowski <Jankowskio@st-francis-de-sales.org>
Subject: Re: Energy-related Field Trips

Hi,

Check with your local power company's outreach program. In Arizona, SRP has an alternative energy development center with solar panels and a hydrogen powered race car. Very cool. Also, are you near a research university? In Arizona, ASU is a center for photosynthesis and solar energy research. At ASU, the kids learn about the latest research in nanotechnology to capture solar energy in ways similar to photosynthesis. Very cool. Check with the outreach programs of the power company and university in your area for good leads. Some outreach programs even have a traveling bus or van which will come to your school with hands-on activities and demonstrations.

I have visited our Palo Verde Nuclear Power Plant in Arizona. The nuclear plant also has a program which will go out to the schools.

Make sure you and your kids are wary of bias and propaganda in all of the field trips. I think lessons about how to detect bias are needed before visiting places which might try to persuade future voters. Follow-up with personal reflection and discussion are also important. Some outreach programs are funded by the company because of protective interests so you must prepare students **before** you visit them.

Good luck. Hope to hear about your experiences.

Deena Gould
Mesa, Arizona

I always took my students to the nuclear reactor at Bay City from initial construction. They have tours especially for educational groups.

Windmill farms are a waste, as is building them in most cases. If you go, make certain that the students are made aware of the problems and are aware of the hype.

And, of course, there's Texas City with all the gas, oil, & chemical companies. There is copper, also.

John Hubisz

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