

Nuclear power inches back into energy spotlight

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The nation's nuclear power industry — stuck in a decades-long deep freeze — is thawing.

Utilities are poised to build a new generation of nuclear plants 30 years after the Three Mile Island accident, whose anniversary was Saturday, halted new reactor applications. The momentum is being driven by growing public acceptance of relatively clean nuclear energy to combat global warming.

Several companies have taken significant steps that will likely lead to completion of four reactors by 2015 to 2018 and up to eight by 2020. All would be built next to existing nuclear plants...

"We're talking about a new generation of technology," says John Reed, CEO of Concentric Energy Advisors. "You have to demonstrate to (lenders) that you can make money with these."

Nuclear plants are hugely expensive, and the credit crisis has all but sealed lenders' wallets. The success of the resurgence also hinges on companies' ability to obtain financing...

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