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State utilities mull ways to power data centers



Project Rainier, an \$11 billion Amazon AI data center is pictured on April 23 between New Carlisle and South Bend.

MICHAEL CLUBB/SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE

Some plan to use fossil fuel plants

Sophie Hartley
Indianapolis Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

Large load data centers like the ones Meta, Google and Microsoft are building across Indiana pose challenges for utilities. They use a massive amount of electricity around the clock. And one data center's energy requirement can rival that of an entire city the size of Indianapolis.

At this point, it's not entirely clear how they will get all the energy they need. Some Indiana utilities are planning for the rush of data centers with new gas plants and battery storage buildouts. But because such plans are often tucked away in regulatory filings, it's been notoriously tricky to find out exactly how the data centers will impact Indiana's energy portfolio.

Earlier this month, NIPSCO confirmed an agreement with Hallador Power Company to purchase energy from the Merom Generating Station, a coal-fired power plant in Sullivan County.

"Some information is public, other is secretive," said Ben Inskeep, the program director for Citizens Action Coalition, an Indiana-based utility watchdog group that has been organizing against hyperscale data center development.

Filings and contracts do reveal a partial picture of how Indiana utilities are responding to increased energy demand, and the answer involves a slew of fossil fuel plants. Here's what we know:

NIPSCO builds out energy portfolio

The Northern Indiana Public Service Company is one of Indiana's largest energy utilities, providing energy and electricity across the northern reaches of Indiana to nearly 500,000 customers and at least two hyperscale data centers so far.

NIPSCO will provide electricity to some of the tech giants in its area through an entity called NIPSCO Generation, often referred to as GenCo, designed to service data centers.

"We have publicly announced contracts with two large-load customers who will be in Michigan City and Hobart," a NIPSCO spokesperson wrote in an email to IndyStar.

In Hobart, Amazon has plans for a 2.4-gigawatt data center. Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission filings show GenCo will support it through 3,000 megawatts of dedicated power

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SERIAL ANIMAL ABUSE CASE

Defendant to claim mental illness

Thomas B. Langhorne
Evansville Courier & Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

A new filing discloses that Shayna Burko, accused of serial animal abuse, will plead "guilty but mentally ill" to her latest felony charges.

In a hearing that may fill a Warrick County courtroom, Burko will plead on June 1 to three Level 6 felony counts of cruelty to an animal, each count of which is punishable by six to 30 months in prison. She has no plea deal with prosecutors in Warrick County, who had said they were not willing to negotiate with her.

A guilty but mentally ill plea does not entitle a defendant to a lower sentence, according to Deputy Prosecutor Jon Schaefer. Schaefer declined to comment specifically on the Burko case, citing Indiana Rules of Professional Conduct for attorneys that prohibit extrajudicial comments on pending cases.

"Indiana law says a guilty but mentally ill plea doesn't limit the judge's options or constrain the judge's discretion any more than a straight guilty plea," Schaefer told the Courier & Press. "If the judge were to send her to prison on a guilty but mentally ill plea, it requires the (Indiana) Department of Correction to provide mental health services that would otherwise be within their discretion."

Burko's plea hearing is set for 1:30 p.m. on June 1 in Circuit Judge Greg A. Granger's courtroom.

Burko's attorney, Barry Blackard, filed medical records last week in her case "to Comply w. GBMI," according to MyCase, an online database of records from civil and criminal cases within the Indiana court system. GBMI is shorthand for guilty but mentally ill.

According to Warrick County Clerk Mike Wilson, the medical records filing has been deemed confidential under court administration rules, as have a pre-sentence investigation report and a sentencing memorandum filed by Blackard.

The Vanderburgh Humane Society (VHS), which has notified supporters

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Evansville woman faces animal cruelty charges

Officers: One dog had lost half its body weight

Houston Harwood
Evansville Courier & Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

EVANSVILLE – An Evansville woman faces four counts of animal cruelty after police say they found malnourished dogs and a turtle inside her apartment, including one dog that had lost nearly half its body weight during nine months in her care.

Police arrested Chauna L. Bednar, 31,

Wednesday evening, May 20, and booked her into the Vanderburgh County jail on four Class A misdemeanor counts of cruelty to an animal. During Bednar's first appearance in Vanderburgh Superior Court on May 21, Magistrate Jill R. Marcrum found probable cause and set bond at \$250 cash or \$2,500 surety.

As of 6 p.m. May 21, Bednar remained in custody, but should she post bond, Marcrum ordered that she not own or possess any vertebrate animals while the case is pending.

The investigation that would end in Bednar's arrest began the afternoon of

May 20 when Evansville Animal Care and Control received a complaint about Bednar's Sweetser Avenue apartment, located in Caldwell Homes, according to a probable cause affidavit filed by Evansville Police Officer T. Bell. The reporting party said they received a tip about the animals' condition, and along with Chauna Bednar's ex-husband, Gary Bednar, the pair went to the apartment to retrieve a dog he claimed to have left in Chauna Bednar's care, the affidavit states.

Chauna Bednar would not allow them inside but did give her ex-husband the dog – named Thor – before officers

arrived.

Gary Bednar told police he left Thor in Chauna Bednar's care roughly nine months earlier, when the dog weighed about 55 pounds.

Animal control personnel weighed the dog after taking him into custody and found he had dropped to 26 pounds – nearly half his body weight.

Officer Bell described a "severely malnourished" animal. He observed Thor's spine and rib cage; the dog's stomach was concave, a sign of extreme weight loss.

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