

CA Employer Brief

Title	Covanta Energy
Employer	Covanta Energy, Mount Lassen Power
Interviewee	Ray Laurie, Head Facility Safety Coordinator and Machinist
Meeting Type	Onsite visit
Date & Time	6/21/2011: 9:30 am - 11:30 am
Location	Westwood, CA
URL	http://www.covantaenergy.com
Purpose	The purpose of this meeting was to learn how renewable energy facilities operate, the occupations employed, and the career ladders available to current employees.
Summary	 <p>(Ray Laurie & Angel Rodriguez; Photo by Michael Vela)</p> <p>Covanta Energy's Mount Lassen Power plant is located in the scenic town of Westwood, California. Covanta Energy is one of the leading energy companies specializing in renewable energy. Covanta converts different forms of waste into electricity and sells it to companies like PG&E and other utility providers. The type of biomass used for energy generation depends on the geographic location of the plant and the type of waste being processed. Within California, some of Covanta's plants convert trash and agricultural waste such as, walnut shells, olive pits, and forestry debris and tree trimmings into electricity.</p> <p>Mount Lassen Power Plant operates on woody biomass – forestry debris and tree trimmings from local residential communities. Mount Lassen Power generates 11 megawatts of power a day; enough energy to power the facility and sell to utility companies. This facility generates electricity by burning woody biomass, which heats water and creates a dry steam at 825 degrees. Dry steam is a low moisture vapor that contains 5 to 6 percent water, a moisture percentage that is less dense than the air we breathe. The dry steam spins turbines 3,600 rpm, generating the electricity.</p> <p>Mount Lassen Power is a small plant employing 20 people. Working at any of the Covanta power plants allows entry-level workers to climb the Covanta career ladder and increase their responsibility level and pay, while being able to remain at one plant or transfer to a sister facility throughout the country. Employees can begin their career at Mount Lassen Power as water truck operators (spraying down dirt roads) and gradually work their way up to Operations Manager. Covanta trains its employees in-house through on-the-job training.</p>

Covanta places a large premium on safety and environmental stewardship. The Mount Lassen Power Plant has operated for more than 4 years without a single industrial accident; as a result the plant has received special OSHA Voluntary Protection Program (VPP) status. The facility operates 60-70% above the federal governments' pollution level standards, giving local residence no noticeable odor. The ash produced through the burning of the woody biomass is rich in nutrients and sold to local farmers as a fertilizer. With State and federal law mandating energy from renewable sources, energy generation facilities like Covanta's Mount Lassen Power Biomass Plant will be crucial in meeting those goals.



(Ray Laurie & Angel Rodriguez; Photo by Michael Vela)

Green Occupations Cited	Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer; General and Operations Managers
Green Industries Cited	Renewable Energy
Interviewers	Angel Rodriguez & Michael Vela/LMID
Contact	Angel.Rodriguez@edd.ca.gov

NOTE: Permission was obtained by the employer to publish this information.

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