

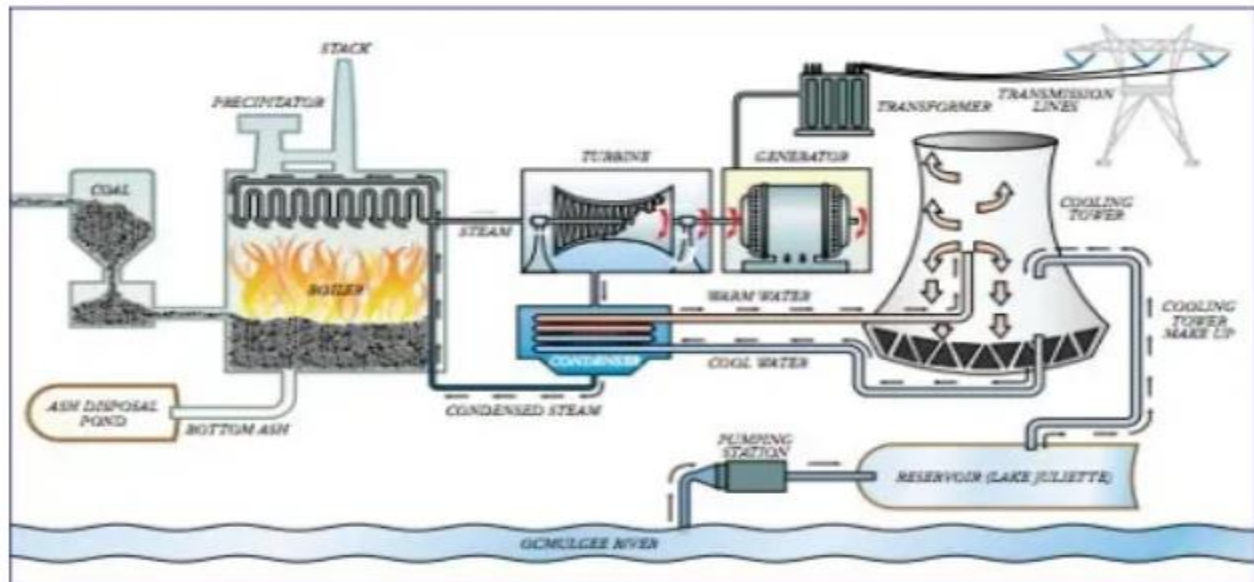
America's Largest Coal Power Plant Burns 11 Million Tons of Bituminous a Year



Keeping the Western hemisphere's single largest coal-fired power plant running nonstop is no easy feat—especially, when the fuel coal is located on the other side of the country. Here's how Georgia Power does it.

The Robert W. Scherer Power Plant is located in Juliette, Georgia, just north of Macon. Named for a former chairman and chief executive officer of Georgia Power, the \$2.1 billion facility has operated since 1982 and consists of four, self-contained 880 megawatt units. As with other fossil-fuel powered plants, the Scherer plant burns coal to heat a massive boiler in each of the units to produce steam that drives electricity-generating turbines. Each boiler reaches 2800 degrees and can produce 5.8 million pounds of steam per hour—that's 8,000 gallons of water evaporated every minute. Smoke is emitted from the plant's two 1,001-foot chimneys while a condenser in each unit converts exhaust steam back into water for reboiling.

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At full capacity, the facility burns roughly 1,288 tons of coal every hour—11 million tons a year. To maintain a steady supply of fuel for the plant, coal is continually delivered from the Powder River Basin, 1,800 miles away in Wyoming, using a sophisticated coal-handling system.

Coal is delivered by BNSF railways from the Wyoming mine to Memphis, Tennessee where it is transferred to the plant by Norfolk Southern railways in 124-car-long trains. There are no less than thirty-six of these two-mile long coal trains en route on the ten-day roundtrip. Between three and five of these mammoth trains offload at Scherer daily using an air-dump system. Coal is simply dumped from doors in the bottoms of the cars as they travel over an unloading trestle. The trains don't even have to stop and allows the plant to unload a 100-car train in a half-hour. Once on-site, the coal is kept in a storage area next to the generators.

The Scherer plant is the single largest point-source of CO₂ in the U.S and the 20th largest worldwide. It produces 27 million tons of carbon dioxide annually. If you happen to be flying in to Hartsfield-Jackson Airport in Atlanta, you 'll be able to see it during your approach. The plant sits along the flight path of numerous commercial airlines and is easily seen during the day.