

## U. S. TOWNS AFFECTED BY POWER PLANT CLOSURES



For the last 90 years, the power plant in Glen Lyn, Virginia, fueled by coal has not only been delivering electricity to the small town but also adding to the town's growth by contributing nearly 25 percent of the town's million dollar budget. However, the plant will be required to close by the end of 2014 in order to cooperate with new federal regulations concerning air pollution. The town manager, Howard Spencer, predicts this might also mean the demise of the town of 200. According to Spencer, the town would have difficulty staying incorporated if it lost all the revenue from the power plant. Due to the stricter regulations contained in the new federal regulations, an associated press study determined that at least 32 similar plans in 12 states are facing closure, with 36 more plants being at risk of closure. While households will not lose electricity, estimates are that 14.7 gigawatts will be deleted from the power grid when the rules become active in 2014-2015, deactivating enough power to run more than 11 million households. The new rules attempt to decrease the level of air pollution in states that are downwind from the power plants. Other rules are aimed at setting regulations for the level of mercury and other toxins present in the smoke emanating from the plants. Dozens of plants are scheduled for shutdown in the coal belt states such as Virginia and West Virginia, with the Midwestern states being most affected by the plant closures. At the American Electric Power plant in Glen Lyn, 44 jobs are in jeopardy. The Giles County Administrator, Chris McKlarney, is concerned about the effect on his \$40 million budget when he loses the \$600,000 tax-revenue benefit provided by the plant in Glen Lyn. But monetary concerns are not the only thing on the administrator's mind. The contribution of the plant and its workers to the community is "hard to quantify," according to McKlarney. Workers at the plant have raised money for local causes and contribute to the community by coaching Little League and participating in the PTO at the local schools. "They're really good people working there," laments the town administrator. Losing those kinds of people will hit the town hard. Losing the stable, well-paying jobs will also negatively impact the local communities. Finding such jobs with good benefits can be difficult in the small towns where the plants are generally located. However, the closures are no surprise and have been a long time coming. Most of the plants have been around for more than 50 years. Many plants, including the one in Glen Lyn, started gearing down production over a year ago, increasing production only when demand rose. As well, many employees have reached retirement age, with others leaving to pursue positions at more modern plants. Even though anticipated and expected, plant closures will be difficult and likely felt the deepest by the smaller communities. As plant closures cause tax revenues to decrease, smaller towns will have the biggest struggle in compensating for the loss.