



**With No Federal Legislation on Horizon, Official Says Local Climate Efforts Continue
(BNA) By Dean Scott
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CHICAGO — The recent collapse of climate change and energy legislation in Congress is unlikely to derail carbon-reduction efforts by local and state governments as well as U.S. companies because they are now producing tangible cost savings through improved building efficiency and lower energy bills, Chicago's top environment official said Aug. 3.

Suzanne Malec-McKenna, commissioner of Chicago's environment department, said the prospects of passing federal greenhouse gas emissions limits in the near future appear uncertain at best after Senate Democrats abandoned the climate bill this summer (148 DEN A-15, 8/4/10).

"The reality is, if we had to sit around and wait for federal action, then who knows when that will happen," the Chicago official told members of the National Association for Environmental Management, which represents corporate environmental and safety officials.

But regulatory pressures remain—the Environmental Protection Agency continues to move forward with greenhouse gas emissions limits for power plants and other stationary sources—and public support for action on climate change remains strong at the local level, she said.

Chicago is among the more than 1,000 U.S. cities that have joined a U.S. Conference of Mayors plan to cut their emissions 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2012, essentially the same U.S. reduction level pledged by the Clinton administration under the Kyoto Protocol. The Bush administration later withdrew U.S. support for that agreement, but U.S. mayors launched their own voluntary initiative nearly five years ago to showcase local resolve to address climate change (94 DEN A-12, 5/17/05).

Retrofits a Key Component

Malec-McKenna said Chicago, which has led U.S. cities in green roof construction with 7 million square feet constructed under Mayor Richard M. Daley, will continue implementation of its Climate Action Plan that calls for nearly 35 actions in the coming decade. They include retrofitting commercial and residential buildings to expanding public transportation, actions supported by nearly \$90 million in federal stimulus funding the city has received during the Obama administration.

Since the launch of Chicago's plan in 2008, the city has retrofitted 13,500 residential units and 252 commercial/industrial properties, Malec-McKenna said. The city's climate plan also calls for reducing

landfill waste, increased use of alternative fuels, and the development of the nation's largest urban-based solar power plant on an unused 45-acre industrial parcel.

In an interview after her speech, Malec-McKenna said many local leaders as well as U.S. companies remain confident that U.S. carbon caps are inevitable, even if they do not see a clear road map for that happening.

"There is a sense of disappointment for many of us outside of Washington that the federal efforts to get a bill haven't been a success," she told BNA. "Going forward, I think it's going to be incremental action, at least for the time being, with local governments and partnerships with companies" working to curb emissions, she said.

While the outlook for that legislation is dim, at least for now, the basic outline for future U.S. legislation is still a cap-and-trade approach, Malec-McKenna said.

"For local and state governments but also for a lot of companies out there, people have a general understanding that there needs to be certainty on these [emissions] limits," she said.

"I think we all have an understanding of what that will be—it's going to address greenhouse gas emissions, it's going to have a system for trading emissions allowances, and there's likely to be some kind of limit on emissions generally," she said. "The question now is when."

More information on the Chicago Climate Action Plan is available at <http://www.chicagoclimateaction.org>.

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