ACHIEVING EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS IN THE POWER SECTOR

The electric utility sector in the Northeast has achieved major reductions in several air emission areas in recent years—in great part thanks to new, more efficient power sources, from natural gas to renewables.

In New York State over the last two decades, NY ISO reports that emissions rates from the power sector dropped by 52% for CO_2, 93% for NOx, and 99% for SO_2.

ISO-NE reports that since 2001, total emissions from power plants in New England dropped by 99% for sulfur dioxide (SO_2), 78% for nitrogen oxides (NOx), and 42% for CO_2.

PJM reports that between 2005 and 2020, CO_2 emission rates fell 39% across its footprint, while nitrogen oxides dropped by 86% and sulfur dioxide by 95%.

In June 2021, U.S. EIA noted that CO_2 emissions from the U.S. electric power sector fell by 32% from 2005 to 2019. EIA observed: "Although both the increased use of renewables and the shift from coal-fired to natural gas-fired generation contributed to reductions in electric power sector CO_2 emissions, the shift from coal to natural gas had a larger effect." EIA estimates that almost 65% of the decline in CO_2 power sector emissions nationally over this time period is attributable to the shift from coal-fired to natural gas-fired electricity generation.