U.S. coal production expected to increase in 2021

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates that 521 million short tons of coal will be produced in the United States in 2020, a decline of 26% compared with 2019 levels. We expect U.S. coal production to increase 20% to 627 million short tons in 2021.

EIA’s forecast of an increase in U.S. coal production in 2021 reflects expected increases in natural gas prices and demand in electric power consumption. In the November Short-Term Energy Outlook, EIA estimates U.S. coal consumption in the electric power sector will rise 23% in 2021 after falling 18% from 2019 to 2020. Forecast lower-than-average winter temperatures, especially in the Upper Midwest and Northwest regions of the United States, contribute to the increase in electric power consumption.

EIA forecasts that U.S. energy-related CO2 emissions in 2020 will be 10% lower than last year because of reduced consumption of all fossil fuels. As a result of less coal consumption, EIA forecasts that U.S. carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from coal will be 18% lower in 2020 than in 2019. We expect total U.S. energy-related CO2 emissions to rise 6% in 2021 as the economy recovers and consumption increases. We forecast CO2 emissions from coal will be up 21% in 2021 compared with 2020 and CO2 emissions from petroleum, which includes most energy use for air travel and on-road transportation, to be up 9%.

ShaMyra Sylvester, for EIA, Washington