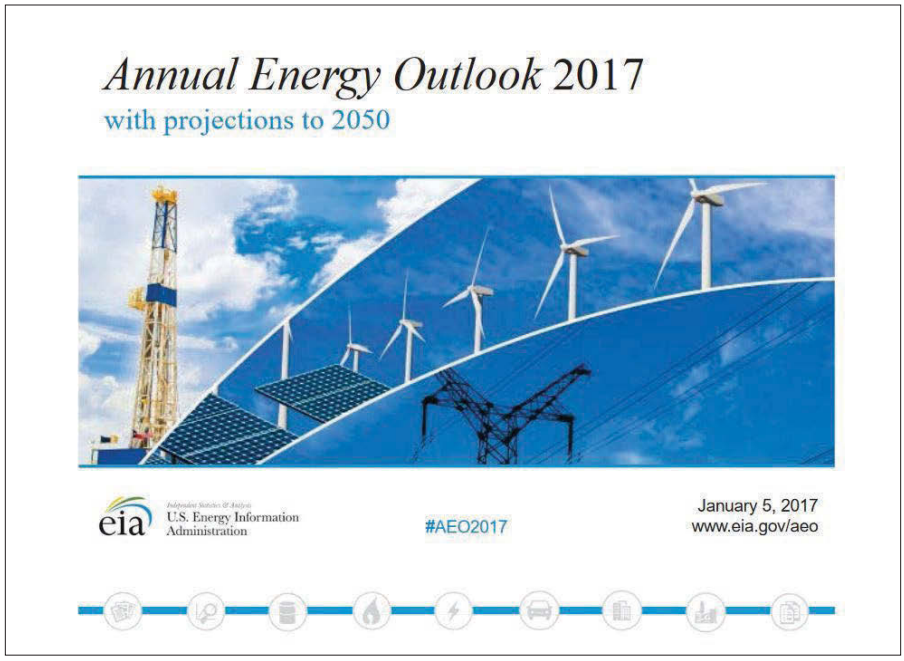
EIA report projects nuclear capacity drop by 2050

The U.S. Energy Information Administration predicts a significant drop in the role of nuclear power in the country's energy mix by 2050, according to its *Annual Energy Outlook 2017* report, despite data showing that domestic energy consumption will remain relatively flat. Several plants are expected to undergo upgrades, increasing capacity by 4.7 gigawatts from 2018 to 2040, but the report anticipates only 4.4 GW of capacity from the new Summer and Vogtle reactors, which are currently under construction. The future of those projects is uncertain, though, due to the bankruptcy filing of Westinghouse Electric Company (see preceding story, and *NN,* May 2017, p. 14). The report does not anticipate any other new plant projects and notes that there are already more reactors lined up for closure than there are reactors under construction or planned.



EIA's newest outlook report projects that nuclear capacity in the United States could decline sharply over the next 33 years.

According to the EIA report, 6.4 GW of nuclear plant retirements have already been announced. The report projects 3.0 GW of generating capacity retirements in 2019–2020 due to near-term market uncertainty, and approximately 10.6 GW of long-term retirements through 2040, based on the uncertainty of reactors' receiving subsequent (second) license renewals. "As many nuclear plants reach the 60-year subsequent license renewal decision after 2040, retirements continue, with another 11.7 GW of nuclear capacity projected to retire by 2050," according to the report.

The decline of nuclear capacity affects other fuel sources as well, particularly coal. Retiring nuclear capacity will be replaced, in part, by natural gas-fired electricity generation. The report assumes that