

Eskom will continue with nuclear planning for now

By  Nicci Botha

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If nuclear is not included in the updated Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) due out in August, then "we will close up shop and move on to the next technology", Loyiso Tyabashe, Eskom's senior manager for nuclear build, told delegates at the African Utility Week held in Cape Town.



Loyiso Tyabashe, Eskom's senior manager for nuclear

But, in the meantime, the power utility has a responsibility under the existing IRP from 2010 to continue with its International Atomic Agency and the World Association of Nuclear Operators obligations.

Until the provisions of the new IRP are known, Eskom, being designated as the owner operator in the nuclear policy framework of 2008, has certain front-end responsibilities such as planning and getting ready for licensing, for sites, for construction, operation and final decommissioning, he said.

Earlier this year, President Cyril Ramaphosa made a comment during the World Economic Forum that South Africa cannot afford nuclear. Similarly, energy minister, Jeff Radebe didn't mention nuclear power in his keynote address at the conference, although he did say in Parliament on Wednesday that nuclear remained part of South Africa's energy mix, but that the size of investment would be determined by policy.



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In response, Tyabashe said Eskom cannot be driven by newspaper articles or interviews with no context. "As I stand here, I am driven by the existing policy. The IRP – the version of 2010 has nuclear in it. Until it is not there anymore, it will be dereliction of our jobs as South Africans and owner operators to not do front-end planning."

Tyabashe also mentioned technical issues regarding permits and authorisations needed for building a nuclear plant. “You cannot just get an environmental authorisation. For a nuclear plant you also need nuclear authorisation which we have started already especially for site installation licence obligations to the National Nuclear Regulator and we are waiting on them to undergo their processes very closely.”

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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