



Join us the second Thursday of every month for a series of "brown bag" seminars, sponsored by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Each seminar is held at NREL's Washington office with a videoconference link to Golden, Colorado. Topics focus on new and innovative renewable energy and energy analysis strategies, models, and technologies.



The Relative Failure of Renewable Energy in the United States: A Case of Technology – or Something Else?

An analytical seminar presented by DOE and NREL's Strategic Energy Analysis Center (SEAC)

Benjamin Sovacool, Oak Ridge National Laboratory
Richard F. Hirsh, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Thursday, November 9, 2006

Noon – 1 p.m. (in Washington, D.C. - bring your lunch)
10 – 11 a.m. (videoconference in Golden, Colo.)

Dramatic improvements in small-scale renewable energy technologies have been made in the past 20 years. Nevertheless, they remain underutilized in the American electric utility system. Despite the immense environmental, technical, and financial promise of renewable energy, such generators still constitute a small percentage of electricity generation capacity in the United States. This seminar attempts to answer the paradoxical question: Why do technologies that offer such impressive benefits also find the least use? The seminar emphasizes how the history and culture of the community of electricity producers and users may result in little use of these new technologies. Going beyond technical explanations of alleged low capacity factors and high capital costs, it focuses on the social nature of decision-making among participants in the electric utility system. The approach not only helps us understand the glossing over of renewable technologies, but also suggests ways of overcoming the barriers faced by their advocates.



**Benjamin
K. Sovacool**



Richard F. Hirsh

Benjamin K. Sovacool recently received his Ph.D. in science and technology studies from Virginia Tech, in Blacksburg, Virginia. He is currently a Eugene P. Wigner postdoctoral fellow in science policy at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and an adjunct professor of history at Virginia Tech.

Richard F. Hirsh is a professor of history and science and technology studies at Virginia Tech. He currently manages Tech's Consortium on Energy Restructuring, an interdisciplinary group of faculty members and graduate students studying elements of recently altered energy markets.

Golden, Colo., information

1617 Cole Blvd., Golden, Colorado
Building 15, Conference Room 375

Please contact Lynne Fenn at lynne_fenn@nrel.gov or 303-384-7439

Washington, D.C., information

901 D Street SW (also the Aerospace Building, 370 L'Enfant Promenade), adjacent to the Forrester Building

Please contact Wanda Addison, of Midwest Research Institute (MRI), at wanda_addison@nrel.gov or 202-646-5278

If you are interested in participating in the seminar via conference call, please contact Wanda Addison, of MRI, at wanda_addison@nrel.gov or 202-646-5278 for instructions.

For more information on NREL analysis, please visit the Web site at <http://www.nrel.gov/analysis>