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Westinghouse could provide reactors for Utah nuclear site

By [David Conti](#)

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Westinghouse Electric Co. has an inside track on providing two of its new reactors for a proposed nuclear power plant in Utah.

The Cranberry company and Orem, Utah-based developer Blue Castle Holdings on Wednesday announced they will exclusively negotiate a deal to partner on the project. Blue Castle wants to use Westinghouse's AP1000 reactors — and potentially a modified version for earthquake-prone areas — in its applications for permits and licenses to build at the Green River site.

"We're excited to move into this next step. It provides a lot of certainty to work with Westinghouse," said Blue Castle CEO Aaron Tilton. The project has won several regulatory battles but is four or five years from receiving any licenses to start building, Tilton said.

Westinghouse has eight AP1000 reactors under construction: four in China, two in Georgia and two in South Carolina. It also signed agreements in the past few months to build in the United Kingdom and Bulgaria.

"In the U.S., the only reactor currently under construction is the AP1000, so that makes it a logical choice for Blue Castle," said Chris Gadomski, lead nuclear analyst at Bloomberg New Energy Finance in New York.

Tilton said negotiations would include a potential price. The reactors are estimated to cost about \$5 billion each. Southern Co. CEO Thomas Fanning said the Vogtle plant his company is building with AP1000 reactors in Georgia will cost \$14 billion.

About 12 projects are proposed around the country. Seven others were suspended since 2009, including an AP1000 project proposed in North Carolina. The 2011 disaster in Fukushima, Japan, had a chilling effect on nuclear plans as regulators and operators re-examined seismic and flood protections around the 100 existing reactors in the United States.

In June, Westinghouse officials met with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to discuss plans to tailor the reactor for use in earthquake-prone areas in the western United States and other countries.

Blue Castle has not completed the necessary testing to determine if increased seismic guards will be needed at the Green River site, Tilton said. The moves Westinghouse has made to get approval for the modified design made it more attractive to Blue Castle, though.

"I think it was beneficial to both parties," Tilton said, noting that if more protection from earthquakes is required, Westinghouse already is seeking approval for a modified design.

Emery County, the location of the proposed plant, has a history of earthquakes with a magnitude above 5.

It also has access to lots of water, which the AP1000 design uses to cool its reactors. In November, a Utah judge upheld the state's approval of Blue Castle's plan to draw water from the Green River.

Blue Castle has spent about \$20 million over seven years on development of the site, Tilton said. Eventually it will seek utilities to buy equity in the plant's ownership and operation.

"We take all the risk. We take the slings and arrows," he said.

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