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## Aspen Power official says company looking to flip the switch by late July

*By admin*

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The Aspen Power biomass plant in North Lufkin is in the testing phase and should be ready to generate electricity sometime between July 15-20, according to a company official.

Danny Vines, president of Aspen Power, said Monday that the plant is testing its machinery now. At 4:10 p.m. Sunday, it performed its first "burn in the boiler," or boilout, Vines said. The next phase will be a steam blow, which takes seven to 10 days to complete.

"A boilout is when you fill the boiler with reverse-osmosis water and heat the boiler up to boil internal components out. This removes rust from inside the pipes," Vines said. "Then, you refill the boiler with deionized water to bring it to mainstream pressure. A series of steam blows then clean away projectiles that could damage the turbine."

Demineralized water is water that has undergone a reverse-osmosis and deionization process to make it as pure as possible, Vines said.

A month ago, Aspen commissioned the wood handling, or wood unloading and storage, portion of the project. The wood handling system "receives the wood, unloads the trucks on truck dumps and piles the wood in a radial stack for use as fuel in the boiler system," Vines said. "A radial stacker represents 28 days of fuel supply for the plant. From a commissioning standpoint, it's ready for operation."

The cooling tower has been commissioned and is in operation, according to Vines.

"Things are going very well," Vines said. "A project of this magnitude takes 36 months of construction time. We're in the 27th month now."

The plant is also still in the process of establishing its employees for when it opens, he said.

The final part of the factory to be tested will be the turbines. Testing will take place in mid July, according to Vines.

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"Everything's running smoothly," Vines said.

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