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[**Average utilization of the nation's natural gas combined-cycle power plant fleet is rising**](http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=1730)



Average [capacity factors](http://www.eia.gov/tools/glossary/index.cfm?id=C#capac_factor) for the Nation's fleet of [natural gas combined-cycle power plants](http://www.eia.gov/tools/glossary/index.cfm?id=C#comb_cycle_unit) have increased steadily since 2005. Increased use of these plants means that facilities that previously served [peaking or more often intermediate load](http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=1710) needs now contribute more significantly to baseload electricity needs.

The chart shows that the average utilization of natural gas combined-cycle power plants has increased across hours of the day. Between 2005 (purple line) and 2010 (red line) average capacity factors for natural gas plant operations between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. rose from 26% to 32%. For peak hours—from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.—capacity factors averaged about 50% (the red line) on a national basis in 2010 compared to about 40% in 2005.

Both increasing domestic supply of natural gas and lower natural gas prices, together with the high efficiency of combined-cycle power plants, have contributed to their increased use.