



Good News for the Environment from 2019 – Wait, What?

The second in a series of four parts to encourage those experiencing eco-anxiety.

No, as Greta and so many youth climate leaders have shared [UN speech], incrementalism will not suffice. Making recent shifts visible allows us to, surprisingly, breathe a big (justified) sigh of relief, even in the face of prevailing smog and the mountainous level of change we need. Here at Stephen Turner Inc. we work on the forefront of sustainability in buildings – locally on net zero school and other leading edge projects and at the state, national and global level on codes and standards for environmentally responsible building design. From this perspective, here's the second of several examples (more soon!) where hope can be drawn from 2019:

Part 2: Coal Dropped by Reinsurance Industry

States and other governmental and international institutions have proven incapable of providing proportionate, timely responses to environmental crises, and today's world is no exception. Frustrations with policy that's moving backwards, such as the USA's exit from the Paris Accords, are soaring. But guess what! A quiet storm of genius, high leverage, behind-the-scenes movement is contrary to those retrograde policy moves. Business shifts are striking heavy blows that could propel us forward. Over the last three years, a quiet storm has disrupted the availability of insurance to the coal industry. 17 of the world's biggest reinsurance firms, which allow primary insurers to "lay off" their risks from insurance policies they issue, now refuse to insure new mines and power plants. Swiss Re and other giant industry leaders have ended coverage for existing coal projects and companies, and have similar policies on tar sands. International NGOs initiated the Unfriend Coal campaign in 2017. Three companies dropped insurance for coal that year, followed by four in 2018, and another ten in 2019 which include the first US and Australian insurers to drop coal.

Refresher: Existing coal power plants contribute about one-quarter of the carbon dioxide emissions associated with electricity production in the USA. Coal is so dirty that its time should be past, but almost one thousand planned new power plants are still on the books. Insurance availability could prevail and countermand these plans, even in the face of policy insanity. More at [[2019 Insurance Scorecard on Coal and Climate Change](#)]

Action: I'm supporting this trend by checking the scorecard link above when I renew my own personal and business insurance policies - and doing business with insurers demonstrating positive progress with quantified coal scores, or at least favoring insurers who are not active in coal, such as those which focus on life insurance. For example, Chubb makes the cut but Berkshire Hathaway (which also owns Geico) is notably absent.

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