

LINDA SANDERS 10/23/18

Exelon's Byron Nuclear Station contributes a considerable amount of money to sustain our county with over \$36.5 million in property taxes just in 2017. The plant employs over 800 full time high paying jobs to the people in the surrounding area. It also brings in over 2000 temporary jobs and the associated boost to local economies and taxes (*restaurants, hotels, gas, and entertainment*) on average 10-12 weeks per year.



## Byron plant highest taxed property in U.S. outside of New York



BY COLE  
LAUTERBACH  
Illinois News Network

**BYRON** — A plot of land in rural northern Illinois has the highest property tax bill in the United States outside of New York.

Assessed at \$546 million, Exelon's Byron Nuclear Generating Station was charged \$36.5 million in property taxes in 2017. That's a higher tab than all but 20 properties in the nation, all of which are in New York.

The Byron plant's bill put it at No. 21 on a list of the nation's top 100 property tax bills, right ahead of Disneyland in Anaheim, California. The Willis Tower came in 28th (\$31,742,883), ahead of Woodfield Mall (No. 64, \$19,603,461) in Schaumburg and Chicago's One Prudential Plaza (No. 77, \$17,910,028) and Water Tower Place (No. 79, \$17,677,503). The highest property tax bill in the U.S. was for Northport Power Station (\$82,093,239) in Fort Salonga, New York. The data was compiled by Commercial Café, a division of property management software provider Yardi.

When New York's sky-high assessments were removed from the list, Illinois' property tax bills accounted for half of the top 30 highest bills.

"The highest-paying office buildings are all in Chicago," Commercial Cafe spokeswoman Adel Dobriban. "Three of the five top taxed industrial properties are in Illinois."

## Assessment

In assessing commercial property like a power plant, output roughly equals assessed value. Newer power plants are given a higher assessment based on how long they're expected to operate. Seventeen U.S. nuclear plants, however, were built in the same year or later than Byron. None but Byron's have a property tax bill on Commercial Cafe's Top 100 list.

This is because the local school district, Byron Community School District 226, brings its own assessor to evaluate the plant's value and the district's subsequent cut of the taxes.

"Exelon has been litigating the property tax assessments for Byron Station since the 2012 assessment, and anticipates receiving a ruling from the Property Tax Appeal Board sometime this year," Exelon spokesman Paul Dempsey said.

While Dempsey said the Chicago-based corporation is committed to paying its fair share of property taxes, he said Exelon is "of the opinion that the more than \$36 million in property taxes it pays each year for Byron Station is far in excess of its fair share based on a reasonable assessment of value."

Of that total tax bill, \$18.6 million goes to Byron School District 226, whose annual \$30 million budget dwarfs its neighboring districts.

Oregon District 220, for instance, has an annual budget of \$15 million. It serves 53 fewer students than the Byron district.

Teachers and administrators in Byron School District 226 have higher average wages than their peers statewide. The average pay for administrators in District 226 was \$112,000 in 2017, \$6,000 higher than the state average of \$106,000. The average salary for Byron School District 226 teachers was \$73,000 in 2017, \$9,000 more than the state average.

With a 17-to-1 student-teacher ratio, Byron School District 226 was close to the state average in 2017. The district had an administrator-to-student ratio of 167:1 compared with the statewide average of 190:1. Officials with the school district did not respond to requests for comment.

The Byron nuclear plant pays property taxes to 11 separate taxing bodies.

Other power plant school districts have numbers similar to the Byron plant. Reed-Custer, which gets property tax revenue from Exelon's Braidwood plant, spent \$28 million on roughly 1,500 students in the 2016-17 school year. Byron started operations in 1985, employs 860 people and supplies power to more than 2 million homes. The plant's two reactors are licensed to operate until 2044 and 2046, respectively.

Exelon got a boost from the state in 2016, when Gov. Bruce Rauner signed into law subsidies worth billions of dollars in gradual money and tax credits to help the corporation keep two other plants from closing prematurely.