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Sleep Number Bed Inventor Tackles Coal Energy Issue

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July 2, 2010

<http://www.earthtechling.com/2010/07/sleep-number-bed-inventor-tackles-coal-energy-issue/>

Ever slept on a “Sleep Number” bed that lets you adjust the comfort level of the mattress to your own liking? If so, you know a certain amount of thought went into the design and development of this popular consumer item. That same mind that thought this up – one Robert Walker – is now turning his creative energies to converting coal into energy with minimal carbon emissions via something he calls the Bixby Process.

Walker’s company, Bixby Energy Systems, announced this week that its new Bixby Process, as it calls it, “superheats coal in a closed-loop environment to produce high-quality synthetic natural gas.” While not everyone is a fan of coal as an energy source (we certainly have our issues with it), it is still an interesting process the company has developed: “a system called devolatilization that superheats coal without burning it in a sealed environment which prevents carbon emissions from being emitted into the air. This separates the coal into clean synthetic natural gas (syngas) and semi-activated carbon without the heavy carbon emissions normally associated with current coal burning or other gasification technologies. The technology does not consume water (although it does use it), and creates no effluent or waste byproducts as a result of the process other than natural gas and semi-activated carbon.”



image via Bixby Energy

Bixby Energy believes that its process, especially in light of data which says that utilities that run on synthetic natural gas produce up to 65 percent fewer carbon emissions compared to those that burn coal, will offer “the potential to provide clean, inexpensive natural gas derived from one of the world’s most plentiful resources – without the additional environmental damage generally associated with coal-based energy production.”

“The United States has centuries’ worth of coal underground,” said Walker in a statement. “Coal is thought to be a ‘dirty’ source of energy. But, in reality, coal is not the culprit. The carbon-emissions problem actually stems from the process of burning coal to produce energy which was developed more than 80 years ago. We are the only company to have developed a technology to tap into this energy source without creating significant carbon emissions and have proven it to be reproducible. We believe that the Bixby Process is the beginning of significant change to the way we retrieve, consume and price our energy needs.”