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UW-Eau Claire looks to wood to use less coal

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Eau Claire (WQOW) - A test at UW-Eau Claire is being performed outside the classroom. The university is trying to see if it can use less coal to heat campus buildings. The experiment involves a natural resource produced right here in Wisconsin.

UW-Eau Claire wants to change the way it heats its halls.

"We are looking at these other areas to see how we can reduce the amount of coal that we burn," says Jim Franklin of the university.

The university's heating plant normally burns coal to heat its buildings and water. Wednesday morning, the university began an experiment that might change that. It replaced 10 to 15 percent of the coal it burns with wood.

"We will be getting wood pellets in and we will continue to test over the next three weeks," Jim says. "Hopefully, at the end of that three weeks, we'll have all the answers we're looking for."

Jim Franklin is the plant's superintendent. He says the experiment will determine if the coal and wood mixture produces the amount of heat the university needs. If the university decides to continue using the mixture, the state's economy might benefit.

"Coal comes from Kentucky so therefore those are putting Kentucky residents to work and not Wisconsin individuals," says Michael Curci of Indeck Energy Services. "By producing wood pellets, we keep the money generated by the sales here in Wisconsin."

The pellets come from Indeck in Ladysmith.

While this experiment takes place, the university says students and staff won't notice any difference.

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