

WBR ARTICLE

Governor: 'No free ride for wind'

By Dennis E. Curran

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CHEYENNE – Gov. Dave Freudenthal is welcoming a fast-growing wind energy to the state, but says the wind producers should be treated just like all the other energy producers in Wyoming and not expect any free rides.

He told Greater Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce members last week that Wyoming is struggling with how to regulate and tax the new, popular wind power generation industry, and he drew loud applause when he said wind producers should be treated the same as other energy producers and pay their share.

"Nobody gets a free ride," he said, "...because fair is fair."

The governor noted that if a company drills an oil well, it is required to reclaim the site when the well is decommissioned and it pays a severance tax on the oil it produces, and wind energy can do the same.

"I don't want to run 'em out, because wind energy is a great part of our future, and they're kind of the energy preference right n now, but that doesn't mean we're going to treat them any differently than anybody else," he said. "We're going to have an even playing field."

In other comments to the chamber members, the governor said Wyoming residents must accept the fact that power lines are going to cross Wyoming because they are required to transport Wyoming's energy to market.

And he said that climate change controls may not happen this year or next but are coming and Wyoming, as a diverse energy-producing state, must prepare for them by developing new, carbon-free energy sources so it can continue as an energy wholesaler and help its energy industry respond to whatever the market requires.