

naturejobs

**JOBS OF
THE WEEK**

The past few months have seen a host of headlines hinting that interest in energy research is likely to continue for years to come. Each story has implications for expanded career opportunities. In March, Tesla Motors, a company in San Carlos, California, founded and financed by Internet entrepreneurs, began production of its high-performance electric car. The move suggests that the US car industry, which has often been slow to innovate, is at last opening up to ideas from other technological disciplines. Hot on the heels of the Tesla stories, an article in *The Wall Street Journal* mentioned that large automotive companies are beginning to seek licences for technologies — in much the same way that big pharmaceutical companies buy intellectual property from biotechnology firms and universities.

And this month, the US Department of Energy released a report predicting that the country could produce 20% of its power via wind by 2030. Denmark, meanwhile, the world leader in wind production of energy by percentage, has been reported as seeking to generate 50% of its power by wind in 2025, up from 20% currently.

Then there are the three viable US presidential candidates, who have all put forward policies to reduce carbon emissions. This attention to climate change marks not only a reversal from President Bush's stance, but a route towards investment in a suite of renewable energies. Meanwhile, the numerous political, economic and societal pressures are driving energy research. These include record-high petrol prices, sky-rocketing levels of car ownership in India and China, fears of the impact of global warming, and a need to reduce reliance on oil produced in politically sensitive areas such as the Middle East and Russia.

The headlines also suggest that private investment is increasing. If public investment follows, we can expect to see more scientists in more disciplines — from materials science to biosciences — dip their hands into what should be a growing alternative-energy funding pot. Political and environmental motivations mean a bright future for energy research and energy-focused careers.

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