

## **National Eye on EcoComplex**

By Dee Henry

Catawba County will find itself in the national spotlight this weekend when the EcoComplex will be featured on CNN's "Your Money" Saturday and Sunday.

"We were excited about it when the crews came to film the complex and we're a little giddy still," said Jack Chandler, assistant director of Catawba County's Department of Utilities and Engineering. "We're just overjoyed that this kind of focus can be put on Catawba County when we need some positive news."

Chandler said the idea started when officials with General Electric were given a tour of the complex in early July. The wheels moved quickly with less than two weeks passing before crews from CNN were at the site, near the Blackburn Landfill off N.C. 10 in the Vale area.

General Electric produces the electrical generators used at the plant.

Chandler said one of the people with GE who toured the facility went back and told one of the company's public information employees, who knew someone at CNN. The news organization had already set a trip to Charlotte to film another segment for the show, and added a stop in Catawba County.

"We were actually unaware of CNN's interest until we got a call from them on July 17," Chandler said. "One of their producers asked if we could help them with videotaping at the EcoComplex and arrange interviews with various people involved with the EcoComplex. Lynn Lail, vice chair of the Catawba County Board of Commissioners, Barry Edwards, the county's Utilities and Engineering director, and others spoke with CNN's Reynolds Wolfe."

The complex fits the show's theme – focusing on what recent news means to your money, according to CNN.com – because of its goal to recover and reuse products and by-products from private and public partners near the landfill. The partners are collaborating to use each other's by-products from private and public partners near the landfill. The partners are collaborating to use each other's by-products as an energy source or as raw material in the production of their own product.

Two businesses, Gregory Wood Products and Pallet One, are already part of the complex, both involved in wood products. Biodiesel fuel research, in collaboration with Appalachian State University, will begin soon, using crops grown on landfill property.

The complex has received national recognition before, winning the 2007 Thomas H. Muehlenbeck Award for Excellence in Local Government from the Alliance for Innovation, based in Seattle, Wash., and a 2008 National Association of Counties Achievement Award.

Local authorities expect the complex to be a highlighted feature during the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners' Annual Conference, hosted by Catawba County in late August.