



UNDER CONSTRUCTION

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California, Colorado and Arizona Lead the Nation in Total Solar Jobs Nationally as Renewable Energy Sector Soars

By Shawn M. Rodda

While the construction industry has suffered tremendously over the last few years, one bright spot has been renewable energy. The Solar Foundation recently released its Solar Jobs Census for 2011, reporting that U.S. solar jobs increased at nearly 10 times the job growth rate of the rest of the economy. Further, solar employers expect to increase the number of solar jobs by 24 percent from August 2011 to August 2012.

Colorado has been a leader in the solar industry, coming in second to California in total solar jobs (and leading the country in total solar jobs per capita). Abound Solar, a Colorado-based company that employs



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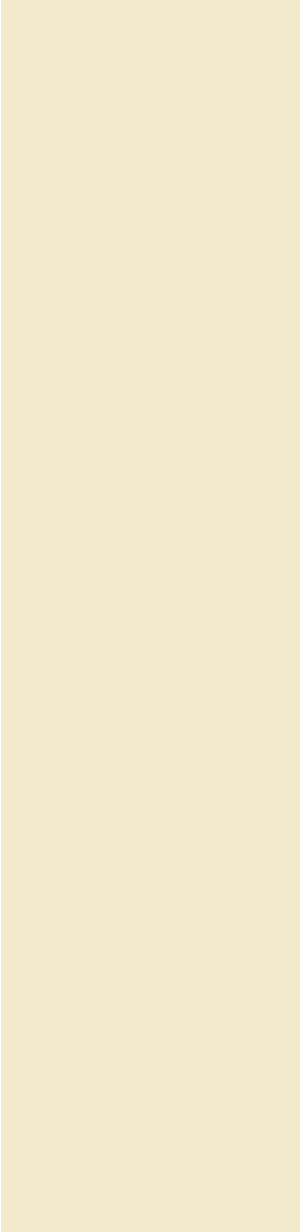
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about 350 people, recently announced it will use a \$400 million loan from the Department of Energy to help pay for the construction of a thin-film solar module manufacturing plant in Indiana. In addition, General Electric, Inc. has announced that it will construct what will be the largest solar factory in the United States in Colorado. The facility will manufacture solar panels and will eventually employ 400 workers.

The solar industry is also going strong in Arizona, which ranks third nationally in total solar jobs. Arizona-based First Solar, Inc. has finalized plans for its Mesa plant, which will create 600 permanent jobs and 400 to 500 construction jobs. The facility will produce solar panels with a total output of more than 250 megawatts. Sempra Energy has announced plans to construct a 150-megawatt project called "Mesquite Solar 1" about 45 miles west of Phoenix. Boosted by a \$337 million loan from the Department of Energy, the electricity it generates will be sold to Pacific Gas & Electric Company and will be enough to generate power for nearly 31,000 homes.

In addition to the projects outlined above, new solar plants have been announced in states such as Mississippi, Ohio and New Jersey. Many of these projects (though not all of them) have been subsidized by the stimulus loan guaranty program administered by the Treasury Department, pursuant to which renewable energy project owners could receive cash grants for up to 30 percent of the cost of a project in lieu of a tax credit. Though the program expired on September 30, 2011, the Solar Energy Industries Association and other industry trade groups are pushing Congress to extend it into 2012.

Wind energy projects have similarly skyrocketed in recent years. In 2004 only 30 wind farms existed in the United States; by 2010 there were almost 400, resulting in approximately 75,000 jobs. According to a recent report by the American Wind Energy Association, Colorado led the country in the amount of new wind energy installed during the third quarter of 2011. Xcel



Energy, Inc. has proposed a 200-megawatt wind farm in Limon, Colorado, which is projected to save its customers almost \$278 million in electricity bills over the next 25 years.

In addition, eight new wind projects have been planned for northwestern Ohio and southeastern Michigan, adding up to \$2.8 billion in investment and generating enough electricity to power approximately 400,000 homes. In Alaska, the Fire Island Wind Project has been approved, which will consist of an 11-turbine farm capable of powering 6,000 homes. Site preparation for the project has commenced, infrastructure construction is planned to commence in the fall of 2011 and project commissioning and commercial power is anticipated in late 2012.

Other evidence of the surge in renewable energy construction projects is the American Institute of Architect's (AIA) announcement that it will release "green" model contract forms designed for use on renewable energy construction projects. The AIA previewed the forms at the U.S. Green Building Council's Greenbuild International Conference and Expo held in Toronto October 4-7. The forms are designed to limit architects' legal exposure on these types of projects. The contract forms will be available in the first quarter of 2012.

California, Colorado and Arizona are ranked first, second and third in renewable energy growth.

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