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- ▶ OES recommends smaller rate increase for Minnesota Power
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- ▶ Trade-in & Save Appliance Rebate Launches March 1
- ▶ \$5 million contract awarded to St. Paul Port Authority for Commercial and Industrial Energy Efficiency Program
- ▶ Minnesota Weatherization Program among top in nation
- ▶ 5 Percent Biodiesel Mandate in #1 Diesel temporarily suspended
- ▶ Study: More generation, transmission needed to meet Minnesota's future energy needs

Solar Electric Systems Achieve Record numbers in Minnesota

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For Immediate Release: Thursday, November 4, 2010

Solar Electric Systems Achieve Record numbers in Minnesota State, utility rebates spur new solar installations

(ST. PAUL, MN) Harnessing solar energy to power a home or business in Minnesota may seem like a challenge, but a growing number of residents and companies are finding that Minnesota is a much sunnier state than its numerous gray, winter days would suggest.

A record number of solar electric systems have been installed in Minnesota in 2010, according to the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Office of Energy Security. As of November 4, a total of 178 installations had been completed so far this year -- already more than double the 76 new installations reported in 2009.

Virtually every region in the United States has sufficient solar energy to produce electricity, and Minnesota is no exception. While solar electric, or solar PV (photovoltaic), systems work best on clear summer days, they also produce energy during the dead of winter when temperatures reach -20 degrees Fahrenheit. In fact, average annual solar resources in Minneapolis are comparable to solar resources in Jacksonville, Fla., and Houston, Texas.

"Minnesota may not be a solar power like California," says Brian Ross, a solar energy proponent who seven years ago installed solar electric and solar hot water systems at his North Minneapolis residence, "but we're making significant progress."

Minnesota currently has 503 solar electric installations with 2.75 megawatts of solar electric capacity. The 178 new installations this year represent a 55 percent increase in the total number of installations from the beginning of the year (325).

Driving the recent spike in installations is a 20 to 25 percent decrease over the past year alone in the price of installing solar. This means the cost of an average residential solar electric system in Minnesota is about \$7.50 per watt, down from about \$10 per watt. Rebates from utilities and sizeable incentives, such as the State Solar Electric Rebate program administered by OES, have further lowered the cost of entry.

So far this year, OES has approved 260 solar electric rebates for residences and small businesses, with a total capacity of 1.5 megawatts.

- ▶ Governor Pawlenty encourages Low-income families to apply for heating assistance before winter arrives
- ▶ Project ReEnergize is launched
- ▶ Wind project receives U.S. Department of Energy funding
- ▶ First installment of energy program stimulus funding arrives
- ▶ Minnesota pumps up biodiesel blend effective today
- ▶ New energy website launched
- ▶ Minnesota receives \$186 million for weatherization projects and state energy programs
- ▶ Governor Pawlenty announces Stay Warm Minnesota Campaign
- ▶ Governor unveils "Green Jobs Investment Initiative"
- ▶ Governor announces Next Generation Energy grants to accelerate biofuel development
- ▶ Governor Pawlenty reminds Minnesotans "Cold Weather Rule" takes effect tomorrow, assistance available
- ▶ Governor Pawlenty announces \$10 million for micro-energy and conservation loans
- ▶ Public meeting on Prairie Island expansion issues
- ▶ Governor announces Bill Glahn as Director of OES and Commerce Deputy Commissioner
- ▶ Deputy Commerce Commissioner Edward Garvey leaving state service
- ▶ Officer of wind power company pleads guilty to mail fraud
- ▶ Dispersed Renewable Generation Study released
- ▶ Office of Energy Security announces Renewable Energy Grant recipients
- ▶ Public comment sought for Climate Change Advisory Group Report
- ▶ St. Paul and Minneapolis Selected as Solar Cities
- ▶ Useful Advice Concerning Space Heaters

A total of \$2.5 million in rebates were made available by OES early this year, and by May those funds were fully committed.

The 2010 state rebate program includes up to \$500,000 for solar hot water and solar air heat systems; the majority of those funds are still available.

The rebates have given the solar industry a boost, according to Philip Lipetzky, a solar installer for Green Energy Products, LLC in Springfield, Minn. "For people on the fence — and there are a lot of them — receiving a rebate is often the deciding factor," Lipetzky said.

Minnesota is solar friendly in other ways, too. The value of solar electric systems is excluded from real property taxation, and solar systems in general are exempt from state sales tax. Some utilities offer grant, rebate or loan programs to fund solar systems. In many cases, a federal Renewable Energy Tax Credit of 30 percent can be applied to the cost of residential or business solar systems installed between Jan. 1, 2009, and Dec. 31, 2016.

Consumers and businesses interested in solar or other renewable energy systems should visit the OES website www.energy.mn.gov (click on "Renewables" and then "Solar") and the Minnesota Renewable Energy Society website (www.mnrenewables.org). For a listing of all available government and utility incentives for solar, visit the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency at www.dsireusa.org.

- ▶ Energy Office has useful advice about ice dams
- ▶ Agreement reached on Big Stone transmission facilities
- ▶ Minnesota joins midwest states to meet renewable energy goals
- ▶ Governor signs renewable energy requirement
- ▶ State receives \$396,000 for two energy projects
- ▶ State Unveils Renewable Energy Website
- ▶ Governor announces testing of E85 conversion kits
- ▶ Minnesota utilities and regulators join National Action Plan for energy efficiency
- ▶ GRE prepares for high demand; requests help from customers
- ▶ Pawlenty announces "OPERATION STAY COOL"
- ▶ Final EIS issued on Monticello Spent Fuel Facility
- ▶ Rosemount public forum on renewable energy - January 17
- ▶ Renewable energy public forum--December 6 in Eveleth
- ▶ Morris public forum on renewable energy November 8
- ▶ Winona wind energy project to receive \$200,000 state grant
- ▶ Commissioner congratulates Great River Energy for state's first C-BED commitment
- ▶ Community wind energy projects to receive \$400,000
- ▶ Department of Commerce calls for more wind energy, efficiency from Xcel
- ▶ Minnesota to benefit from federal energy legislation
- ▶ Department announces settlement on natural gas rates
- ▶ Northfield, Morris receive Community Wind Energy Rebates
- ▶ Pawlenty praises Clean Energy Accord Reached by Xcel Energy, environmental & business groups
- ▶ Updated wind data available in report; new monitoring site at Wayzata High School

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