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Massachusetts Completes the Nation's First Large Wind Turbine Blade Test Facility

Recovery Act project created hundreds of jobs, will help accelerate deployment of next generation wind turbines

U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu issued the following statement on today's ribbon cutting for the Wind Technology Testing Center, a joint effort by the Department of Energy (DOE), the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, and DOE's National Renewable Energy Laboratory. The Wind Technology Testing Center is the nation's first large wind blade test facility and is capable of testing longer blades than any other facility in the world. The center will help reduce the cost of wind energy, accelerate technical innovation in turbine and blade design, and speed the deployment of the next generation of wind turbine blades for both offshore and land-based wind energy. In May 2009, Secretary Steven Chu joined with Governor Patrick in Boston to announce $25 million in funding for the project.

"The Wind Technology Testing Center will help strengthen the role U.S. manufacturers and U.S. workers are playing in the expanding renewable energy industry," said Secretary Chu. "As the global wind power market expands, this facility will help ensure that the United States has the testing infrastructure needed to lead the world in wind energy technology."

Increased research and development on larger blades will speed the deployment of innovative designs for wind turbines both offshore and on land. The new blade testing facility will attract companies to design, manufacture, and test their blades in the United States. It will also promote the growth of American companies who are part of the supply chain for wind turbine production, including fiberglass and advanced composite materials manufacturers. This growth in the domestic wind energy industry will also play an important role in meeting President Obama's goal of doubling electricity from clean energy by 2035.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON TODAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT

When selecting Massachusetts for the Wind Technology Testing Center in 2007, the Department of Energy initially pledged $2 million for the project through a cooperative research and development agreement with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. In 2009, the Department of Energy awarded Massachusetts an additional $25 million in funding from the 2009 stimulus bill, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, to accelerate the design and construction of the facility. The Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust contributed an additional $13.2 million in grants and loans. The project was an important stimulus for the state's economy, employing about 300 construction, design and administration workers over two years.

The testing center is located at the Boston Autoport in Boston Harbor, near substantial offshore wind resources. The facility also features truck access, a rail spur, and a dock for transporting blades from ocean-going vessels.

The Wind Technology Testing Center has the capacity to test blades up to 90 meters in length, suitable for wind turbines up to 15 megawatts. Previously, blades over 50 meters could only be tested in Europe, not in the United States.