

## **Solar industry shows it is gaining power**

*Studies point to a bright future as one of the industry's biggest events draws thousands to the Los Angeles Convention Center.*

**Tiffany Hsu, Los Angeles Times, 10-13-10**

The amount of electricity generated by new solar installations this year is expected to be twice as much as the capacity added last year, enough to power 200,000 more homes, bolstering the market for clean-tech jobs, according to several studies unveiled this week.

The studies — all timed to the solar trade show at the Los Angeles Convention Center, one of the industry's largest — are painting a rosy outlook for the renewable energy industry.

One of them, slated for release Wednesday, said that over the next year more than half the solar companies expect to hire more employees, boosting the nation's solar workforce 26%. The study by the Solar Foundation, a Washington, D.C., nonprofit group, said 93,000 people work in the solar energy industry in the U.S.

The report comes as at least 27,000 people are expected to pass through the Solar Power International convention, which organizers bill as the biggest solar trade show in North America. More than a thousand companies are exhibiting.

When the conference launched in 2003, just a thousand people showed up to visit 100 exhibitors. The event has boomed each year since, and last month it was named by Trade Show Executive magazine as the convention with the most dramatic growth.

The domestic solar market has grown more than 50% each year over the last decade, said Rhone Resch, president of the Solar Energy Industries Assn., a trade group co-sponsoring the convention with the Solar Electric Power Assn. "Now we're reaching a scale where we make a difference," he said.

Resch noted that the largest solar installations, which produced just 500 kilowatts earlier in the decade, now exceed 500 megawatts, or enough to power 100,000 homes. "There is literally no limit to the size and the growth rate of solar in the United States," he said.

Much of the growth has occurred in California, according to the Solar Energy Industries Assn. Well over half the U.S. solar industry's \$6-billion value is based in the state, the association said. The trade group chose Los Angeles because "it's the epicenter of the solar energy market," Resch said.

But for the next three years, the convention is heading east, with plans to move to Dallas, then Orlando, Fla., and Chicago.

Other states are stepping up efforts to have solar companies locate projects and open manufacturing plants away from California. Global competition is heating up as well, with several Asian and German companies exhibiting at the convention.

Chinese and Taiwanese manufacturers, for instance, produced 80% of the crystalline silicon cells used in solar panels in the third quarter of 2010, a report from research group Solarbuzz said.