

New solar panel system largest in Alameda County

Jeanine Benca, Bay Area News Group, 4-14-11

LIVERMORE -- Local business leaders, elected officials and clean-energy supporters helped flip the switch Wednesday on a massive solar panel system that will power a major food service distribution company.

Billed by its developers as the largest solar panel system in Alameda County and one of the largest in Northern California, the 1.18-megawatt, 4,354-photovoltaic solar panel system was installed on the roof of U.S. Foodservice-San Francisco's main warehouse, located on Lawrence Drive in Livermore.

The panels will generate more than 1.35 million kilowatt-hours of electricity each year. The installation is expected to generate, at peak production, enough electricity to power 194 average California homes and offset the equivalent emission of 24,278 tons of pollutants over the next 25 years.

It is designed to provide about 40 percent of the company's power needs during daylight hours, officials said.

"Our new solar panel system will benefit both the environment and our bottom line," Phil Collins, division president of U.S. Foodservice-San Francisco, said in a statement.

The Livermore warehouse serves as the company's primary storage facility for delivery trucks, produce and other food and paper products it delivers to schools, hospitals and other locations throughout Northern California, company spokeswoman Elin Nozewski said. Its parent company is based in Illinois.

Livermore Mayor Marshall Kamena, a representative from the office of U.S. Rep. John Garamendi, a vice president with Pacific Gas & Electric and others attended the solar system's ribbon-cutting Tuesday, she said.

It has been a noteworthy week for renewable energy in California. On Tuesday, Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law a mandate requiring the state's utilities to obtain 33 percent of their electricity from renewable sources such as geothermal, wind and solar by 2020.

Also this week, a proposal for what is thought to be the largest solar farm in the nation was disclosed Tuesday by developers who want to build the complex in eastern Alameda County. The Mountain House Solar Farm, if built, would produce enough electricity for 250,000 homes and generate 400 megawatts of electricity, executives with Pegasus Energy Partners have said.