

# CA Doubled Pace of Renewables Last Year

**Craig Miller, KQED (San Francisco television), 1-25-11**

California Regulators say the state's utilities about doubled the growth of new renewable energy sources last year. The California Public Utilities Commission says developers added 653 megawatts of capacity in 2010, nearly twice the pace of 2009.

For all that, utilities did not quite make the state-imposed requirement that they get 20% of their electrical generation from renewables by last year. That requirement was affirmed by the legislature. In September of last year, former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger moved the goalposts to 33% by 2020. But that mandate is backed by an executive order, not by state law.

According to the CPUC quarterly report, last year's progress puts the state's total potential renewable power production over 1,700 megawatts. Almost half of the 2010 gains were achieved by a single big wind farm in Kern County coming online. In addition to wind and photovoltaic solar, some of the new generation last year came from biomass and small-scale hydro. The state does not recognize power from large hydroelectric dams as countable toward its renewable energy goals.

Major utilities will update numbers for their individual energy mix in March. At the end of 2008, Southern California Edison led big utilities in the green power derby with more than 17% renewables in its mix. PG&E provides more than 14% and San Diego Gas & Electric more than 10%.

The CPUC says there are already enough megawatts "under contract" to meet that 33% goal in 2020 -- but glitches in financing, siting and permitting could all get in the way of some of that power actually being delivered. The total share of electricity provided by renewables such as wind and solar energy moved to more than 15% in 2009, from about 13% in 2008.

None of the renewable energy gains last year were from large solar-thermal projects, though several of those were permitted and broke ground toward year-end, as developers raced against a deadline to get federal stimulus funding.