

US Geothermal Industry Grew 26% in 2009

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The U.S. geothermal power industry continued strong growth in 2009, according to a new report by the Geothermal Energy Association (GEA). The April 2010 U.S. Geothermal Power Production and Development Update showed 26% growth in new projects under development in the United States in the past year, with 188 projects underway in 15 states which could produce as much as 7,875 megawatts (MW) of new electric power.

According to GEA, the projects under development will represent capital investment of more than US \$35 billion when completed.

"Geothermal power can be a critical part of the answer to global warming," said Karl Gawell GEA's executive director. "For example, California could achieve its 2020 goal for global warming emissions reductions just by keeping energy demand level and replacing its coal-fired generation with geothermal," he asserted.

According to GEA's analysis, Nevada continued to lead in terms of projects under development with more than 3,000 MW in the pipeline. The fastest growing geothermal power states were Utah which quadrupled its geothermal power under development, New Mexico which tripled, Idaho which doubled, and Oregon which reported a 50% increase. In addition, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas all reported that they had their first geothermal projects in development.

"These geothermal power projects will create substantial sources of new employment across the country," said GEA Executive Director Karl Gawell. "Not only are we seeing more and more development and hiring in places with a long history of geothermal like Nevada and California, but for the first time these jobs are being created in the Gulf Coast, in states such as Louisiana and Mississippi. Along with a huge number of new construction jobs, geothermal power also creates many permanent positions that can never be outsourced."

Together, the direct, indirect and induced employment created by these projects is estimated by GEA to be 29,750 permanent jobs and 112,000 person-years of construction and manufacturing employment. According to GEA, the projects under development will represent capital investment of more than US \$35 billion when completed.

New geothermal power projects are in progress in fifteen states from the Pacific to the Gulf Coast. GEA identified new projects in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Four of the top five states with geothermal power under development have substantial renewable standards. Those states in order of geothermal development and their state renewable requirement are listed below.

- California: 33%
- Nevada: 25%
- Oregon: 25%
- Utah: 20%
- Idaho: 0%

In addition to large utility scale power projects, the survey continued to show expanding interest in power systems under 1-MW with projects in Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Oregon and Wyoming.