

Print this Page



Arvada solar firm gets boost

by:
Article Contributed on: 1/22/2010 4:57:25 PM

Producer of lightweight film plans e ready for orders

The folks at ReflecTech were feeling joyful Jan. 8: The Arvada company was informed it is on track to receive a tax credit allocation for \$750,000 from the federal government.

Once the company invests \$2.5 million to equip an existing facility to manufacture the firm's reflective mirror facets for high-volume production, they will receive the \$750,000 federal incentive as a credit on their tax bill. The reflective film is used in outdoor concentrating solar power collector systems.

Made of thin layers of silver and polymers, the film was developed in close partnership with the National Renewable Energy Lab in Golden. It can be used in place of the fragile glass mirrors in large solar power plants. Because it is lighter in weight, it is less costly to use.

The hope is that jobs will be created when the manufacturing process begins. "We need to have our facility ready for business by the time the concentrating solar power industry gets rolling again," said Alison Mason, marketing director at ReflecTech.

When exactly that would be is unknown, but co-inventor Randy Gee was hopeful.

"I've been in the solar industry for nearly three decades, and seen lots of lean times, so we are looking for better things ahead. As the economy recovers, things will brighten up," Gee said.

Gee and Randy Jorgensen invented the mirror film in collaboration with NREL. According to Mason, the U.S. Department of Energy set a goal of developing low-cost, high-reflectance film in the 1980s.

Gee and Jorgensen started work on the film in 1997. After the product was tested at NREL, Gee started ReflecTech in 2004 to produce and market the film under exclusive license to NREL.

Mason said high-volume production would begin after the facility was equipped and the economy thaws.

"We anticipate employing an average of three people during construction, and 23 people full time once the facility reaches full-production capacity," said Mason.

Gee said the company just finished a big project in California near the Mojave Desert installing a system that generates electricity for customers of Southern California Edison, a major electric utility.

"It uses the mirror system and was added on to an existing system that's been running more than 20 years," said Gee.

Gee said although other countries have surpassed the U.S. in development of solar delivery systems, ReflecTech was ready to put the investment into producing and delivering its product at a faster rate: "We have to keep up and stay ahead. This has been a long time coming."