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A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR SOLAR MINING COMPANY

Efficient, affordable solar water heating saves energy and money — and the environment

What is a “solar energy utility?” Green Bay, Wisconsin-based Solar Mining Company has the answer, and the company that calls itself “The Other Utility™” wants Wisconsin businesses to understand the benefits of using the sun’s energy to help offset ever increasing energy costs. Solar Mining offers its customers the opportunity to implement solar energy for their hot water heating needs and promises that doing so will save money and offer clean, reliable energy. This is the first time solar thermal energy is available in the Midwest as a commercially produced utility service option.

Like other traditional utilities, Solar Mining Company owns, runs and maintains its generating facilities, in this case solar collectors — but that is where the similarities end. The company designs, builds, and maintains its solar energy systems at its Green Bay offices and then provides the equipment to the customer for free. Under its “Utility Program,” Solar Mining offers its cleaner, greener energy to the customer at a discount to what they are paying for comparable amounts of fossil fuels. There is even a point in the program where the customer’s green energy rates are capped, and they would never see another increase.

“We are the only provider of a clean, locally produced energy source that sells its energy for less than local propane and gas companies,” said Richard Lane, managing partner, Solar Mining Company. “We treat solar energy like any other form of energy; it just happens to come from the sun. In these times of strained energy grids, blackouts, and supply and pipeline concerns, it’s comforting for our customers to know they will always have control over a portion of their energy needs. Our energy is produced at the customers location and when needed, instantaneously delivered to its point of use.”

In addition to the materials and installation, Solar Mining Company also assumes responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the solar systems it installs. “We want our customers to know we are in the relationship for the long haul,” said Lane. “By making the process as risk free as possible, we want organizations and companies to realize how easy it can be to use solar energy to heat their water and save energy, money and the environment.” Currently the Utility Program is only available to commercial, industrial and nonprofit users of hot water.

In addition to its Utility Program, Solar Mining also has a traditional contractor program under which the company designs and builds solar hot water systems and then bills the customer for material and labor. This program is attractive to customers that want to own their own system and can take advantage of the tax credits and depreciation allowances of the system. Those who opt for this program will typically see a payback on their investment within 6 to 10 years — depending on what they are paying for fossil fuel, the cost of the installation, and to what extent they can take advantage of the tax and depreciation allowances.

Vision to Reality: Grants Make a Real Difference

Solar Mining Company started as a vision for Lane nearly 20 years ago when he was working for Packerland Solar in Green Bay. There, he worked with Packerland Packaging to provide the company with solar powered hot water, using the nation’s largest solar water heating system. To take what he learned at Packerland and make his own business feasible would take some up front funding.

That money came in part from Wisconsin’s Focus on Energy Renewable Energy program’s business and marketing grants. “Focus on Energy understands that over the long term, businesses will start to see other options for energy systems as viable solutions” said Lane. “With natural gas and fossil fuel prices on the steady rise, renewable energy systems are being installed as a means of controlling long-term costs and ensuring a reliable source of energy.”

Focus on Energy's Renewable Energy program strives to make renewable energy an option in Wisconsin by encouraging Wisconsinites to investigate and adopt renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, hydro and biomass. It seeks to raise awareness, provide training and financing, enhance marketing, promote technical assistance and support the installation of renewable energy technologies across Wisconsin. The program also offers technical assistance and site assessments, and helps businesses locate renewable energy contractors when they are interested in installing a renewable energy system.

“Working with Focus on Energy to secure the funding continues to be a great experience,” Lane said. “The process is clear and very well defined. Without the grant from Focus on Energy we would not be a company and there would be no solar utility program.”

For more information on Solar Mining Company or for a free consultation, call (920) 884-8510, extension 2 or visit solarminingco.com.

To learn more about Focus on Energy and its Renewable Energy program, or to find out if your company qualifies for a grant call 800.762.7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.

About the Focus on Energy Renewable Energy Program

Focus on Energy is a public-private partnership that provides energy efficiency and renewable energy information and services to the state's energy utility customers. Focus on Energy's Renewable Energy program seeks to raise awareness, provide training and financing, enhance marketing, promote technical assistance, and support the installation of renewable energy technologies across Wisconsin. Focus on Energy provides applications, with full program details, at 800-762-7077 or at focusonenergy.com.

Sidebar Story

The Future is Bright

Green Bay, Wisconsin-based Solar Mining Company calls itself “The Other Utility™” and managing partner Richard Lane wants Wisconsin businesses to understand the benefits of using the sun’s energy to help offset ever increasing energy costs. “We are the only provider of a clean, locally produced energy source that state businesses can purchase for less than local utility and gas companies. The energy is produced at the location of the business and when needed, instantaneously delivered to its point of use.”

Solar Mining offers its customers the opportunity to implement solar energy for their hot water heating needs and promises that doing so will save money and offer clean, reliable energy. Under its “Utility Program,” Solar Mining offers its cleaner, greener energy to their customers at a discount to what they are paying for fossil fuels. There is even a point in the program where the customer’s green energy rates are capped, and they would never see another increase. For those customers that can take advantage of depreciation and tax credits, Solar Mining also sells solar energy systems.

Two of the company’s recent projects include solar hot water systems at the River Falls Municipal Utility and the University of Wisconsin — Green Bay. At River Falls, the solar system heats water that must be maintained to temperature to ensure diesel-electric generators perform to requirements. At the University of Wisconsin — Green Bay, the system provides hot water for the swimming pool and other hot water applications. Solar Mining is currently installing a system at the Howard Johnson’s hotel in Green Bay, Wis., and upon completion of that project will install systems for the Madison School District and the University of Wisconsin — Milwaukee.

Other projects Solar Mining is looking to in the future cover a variety of different building types including hotels, commercial laundries, YMCA’s, farms, and schools. Since Solar Mining discounts its energy, its customers see an immediate economic benefit. Solar Mining does not currently install residential systems.

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