

SOLAR EMPLOYMENT RISES DESPITE SLUGGISH ECONOMY



The solar industry in the United States has become a go-to industry for jobs recently as employment has risen despite the country's sluggish economy. As of the month of August, there were 100,237 solar jobs across all 50 states in 5,000 companies. The United States is preparing to install roughly 1,750 megawatts of solar PV in 2011, which would be double the amount of last year's total and enough of a number to power 350,000 homes in the country. The Solar Foundation's "*National Solar Jobs Census 2011: A Review of the U.S. Solar Workforce*" released the following information that was acquired from over 2,100 solar companies in the country:

- 6.8% growth from August 2010- August 2011
 - 6,735 new solar jobs created from August 2010 - August 2011 in all 50 states
 - The overall economy grew only 0.7% during the period, and fossil fuel electric generation lost 2% of its workforce.
- The state of California is the country's leading employer when it comes to solar powered jobs, with 25,575 employees. The remaining top ten states in the country include Colorado, Arizona, Pennsylvania, New York, Florida, Texas, Oregon, New Jersey and Massachusetts. The Census has found that nearly half of all the solar companies in the country plan on hiring over the span of the next 12 months and expect to hire 24 percent more people, which would calculate to 24,000 new jobs by August of 2012. "These survey responses merely reflect employers' best estimates at expected new hiring, but it demonstrates a clear growth pattern for the industry and tremendous optimism by employers in the industry," says Andrea Luecke, executive director of The Solar Foundation. "Employers expressed similar optimism last year, but failed to meet their hiring expectations because of stalled legislative initiatives and continued policy uncertainty." Shayle Kann, Managing Director of Solar at GTM Research, had the following to say: "The potential expiration of the 1603 Treasury program, along with current malaise in major markets such as New Jersey and Pennsylvania, threatens to slow growth in 2012. Still, with increasing market diversity and the continued emergence of the utility-scale solar market, we anticipate that the U.S. market share of global installations will triple over the next four years." The commercial market for solar power surpassed that of California for the first time largely because of the Renewable Energy Standard that citizens can use in the state. New Jersey now boasts the largest commercial solar power industry in the country but it will likely shrink because of Governor Chris Christie's support of fossil fuels and his plan to reduce the state's Renewable Energy Standard. "More than 100,000 Americans work in the solar industry, double the number in 2009. Solar is a proven job creator at a time when the unemployment rate for the country remains stubbornly high," says Rhone Resch, SEIA CEO. "The 1603 Treasury Program has been the single most effective policy driving renewable energy growth during the past two years."