

Local officials dedicate cutting-edge Lodi Energy Center

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[Local officials dedicate cutting-edge Lodi Energy Center](#) By Maggie Creamer/News-Sentinel Staff

While standing next to the towering Lodi Energy Center, about 300 local and state officials dedicated the state-of-the-art natural gas power plant on Friday.

The plant will generate 300 megawatts of power, enough to power a little less than 300,000 homes on average, said Kevin Cunningham, the plant's general manager. Aside from powering Lodi homes, the plant will energize Bay Area Rapid Transit trains, high-tech Silicon Valley businesses and move water down the state's aqueduct.

The plant has one final series of tests and then will gradually fire up during the next three weeks, operations and maintenance supervisor Rafael Santana said while leading a tour after the dedication ceremony.

The Northern California Power Agency constructed the plant and will own and operate it.

NCPA president James Pope said it was important both NCPA members and non-members participated in the project because it increased the amount of energy being produced from the plant, which created economies of scale for all the agencies involved.

"Bringing together 13 entities can be a challenging experience. But today I commend their perseverance and their belief in a project of this size and in selecting this cutting-edge technology," Pope said.

Councilman Larry Hansen pointed to the benefits the city of Lodi will receive from the energy center. The city received more than \$1 million in one-time sales tax money when the \$160 million Germany-based Siemens Energy power island, which is the combustive turbine, was purchased.

Lodi will also be selling some of Lodi's treated wastewater to help run the plant, resulting in an additional \$960,000 in revenues every year.

Hansen talked about how when the White Slough wastewater treatment plant was built in the 1960s, the council was looking toward the future. He said he feels that the participants in the Lodi Energy Center are also building the plant now so it will be beneficial for decades.

"I am extremely proud I had a role in it and everybody who participated should feel that. Ten, 20, 30 years from now, as this whole energy crisis unfolds, I know we are going to be so grateful that this plant was built in Lodi," he said.

The entire project costs \$388 million and will be paid for through bond financing. The cost to run the plant every year is \$90 million.

The energy produced will be used in a variety of ways. Cities that are participating will use the energy to power homes and businesses. The California Department of Water Resources, which owns a third of the plant's energy, will use it to move water down the state's aqueduct to provide for millions of Central and Southern California residents.

The new power plant will help the agency cut ties with coal energy from outside the state, California Resources Agency Secretary John Laird said.

"Unfortunately, part of that portfolio in recent years has included coal energy from outside the state," Laird said. "Because of this plant that we are dedicating today, that last contract will expire next year, and this will be the substitute that will change how we power water in California."

Silicon Valley Power, which is owned by the city of Santa Clara, will power high-tech communication businesses. And Bay Area Rapid Transit will use it to move BART trains throughout the San Francisco area.

"Whether it is powering the web, powering the cloud or powering Central Valley irrigation, the Lodi Energy Center will fuel the state's economy far into the future," Pope said. "Californians from every part of our state will be the ultimate beneficiaries of the cooperative spirit that has built the Lodi Energy Center that we celebrate today."

The state has strict renewable requirements, but California Energy Commission Robert Weisenmiller said utilities need electric utilities also need to focus on dependable sources.

"The wind and sun are great resources, but at the same time, you see the power output of those drop off pretty substantially as the wind falls off or as the sun sets, so we need the gas plants to complement the renewables and fill in behind them," Weisenmiller said.

Because the new power plant is the first of its kind in the state, it will also help set the state standards for future projects.

"Extensive monitoring during the first year of generation will be used by California officials to establish how future fast-start equipment is evaluated in terms of emissions and operating capability," Pope said.