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## SoCalEd orders 200 MW of solar panels, plans solicitation for 250 MW more

By Jeff Stanfield

[Southern California Edison Co.](#) said March 10 that [SunPower Corp.](#) won a contract to provide solar panels for up to 200 MW needed for the utility's solar photovoltaic installation program, which SoCalEd said is a major part of the largest U.S. PV program ever undertaken.

During the next five years, SoCalEd said it plans to install, own and operate 250 MW of solar generating capacity, with most of it using SunPower's panels.

Eventually, the [Edison International](#) subsidiary wants to have up to 500 MW of solar-powered generating capacity. To get to that level, SoCalEd said in a [news release](#) that it hopes to launch a competitive solicitation later this month offering long-term contracts to independent solar power providers willing to install, own and operate an additional 250 MW of photovoltaic generation and supply power to the utility.

Most of the panels of the utility-owned half of the program will be installed on large warehouse rooftops. These 1-MW to 2-MW solar installations will be connected directly to neighborhood distribution circuits where the leased rooftops are located. SoCalEd will install the panels on more than 100 rooftops, SoCalEd spokesman Gil Alexander said in an interview.

The utility is considering installing several ground-mounted stations too and for that SoCalEd is evaluating other suppliers to determine what products would best meet that need, Alexander said.

The estimated cost of the utility-owned installations is \$875 million, excluding future operation and maintenance expenses Alexander said.

"We told regulators two years ago we believe we can do it for \$3.50 per installed watt," Alexander said. "This project was developed to deliver solar photovoltaic energy in California for half the prevailing cost of that technology. Today's announcement helps us keep that promise."

The solar stations will be mounted primarily on rooftops in Riverside and San Bernardino counties and mostly in the Inland Empire region in locations where power is most needed to meet growth, he said.

Primarily, the buildings will be warehouses where energy needs are minimal and where the owners do not have incentives to participate in the California Solar Initiative, or CSI, which provides incentives for customers to mount their own rooftop solar systems, Alexander said.

This program will have no relation to the CSI program, as the costs of the utility-owned installations and the power purchase agreements with independent solar developers will be recovered in customer rates, he added.

"It is not like building owners getting financial incentives and installing solar panels on their roof to offset power bills," Alexander said. "These will be buildings with low energy demand where the owner would not otherwise think seriously about adding solar themselves because the gain does not pencil out."

Instead, the building owners will get money from SoCalEd for leasing their rooftops in long-term agreements.

The SunPower T5 Solar Roof Tile integrates into a single unit a solar panel, frame and roof mounting system, thereby reducing installation time and costs, SoCalEd said. In addition, the SunPower product was selected because it will produce more power per installation, the utility said.

Alexander said the integrated panel and roof mounting is a primary consideration for reducing rooftop installation costs, but that for ground-mounted units, the integrated roof system has no bearing so other suppliers are being considered for the remaining 45 MW of utility-owned systems. SunPower panels had already been selected for the first 5 MW of utility-owned systems.

For the competitive solicitation, the California Public Utilities Commission on Jan. 21 approved a process to be used for the second track of SoCalEd's photovoltaic program. The commission directed SoCalEd to conduct a

competitive solicitation offering long-term power contracts to independent solar power providers willing to install an additional 250 MW of photovoltaic generation.

Alexander said the cost of the competitive half of the program will not be determined until winning bidders are chosen. SoCalEd expects this fall to determine the winning bidders and submit contract proposals to the PUC for approval. A specific dollar amount will be kept confidential, but Alexander said his company will say whether the costs come in above, below or equivalent to the utility-owned projects.

The request for proposals will follow the same model of any California renewable energy solicitation, he said, and will be counted toward meeting SoCalEd's renewable portfolio standard obligations.

The utility's grid engineers will study the electrical effects of a high penetration of photovoltaics on distribution circuits and adapting circuits to accommodate these large installations. The information gained will be shared with the power industry, SoCalEd said.

SoCalEd has already installed two rooftop solar projects in Fontana, Calif., and Chino, Calif., and is within days of announcing a third project in the Inland Empire, Alexander said.

With two major seaports, Los Angeles and Long Beach, Calif., are major shipping centers and the region has many warehouses with expansive flat roofs covering many acres of real estate. ProLogis, the world's largest owner, manager and developer of distribution facilities, hosted SoCalEd's first rooftop installation at Kaiser Distribution Park in Fontana, and owns 180 distribution facilities in SoCalEd's territory.

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