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## Expo shows how to let the sunshine in in the gray Northwest, solar power has many uses

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BY JENNIFER WILLIS  
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“We’re trying to show people that solar energy really works in the Northwest,” says Jon Miller, executive director of the Oregon Solar Energy Industries Association. “People don’t realize how much we can do today with the technology that’s available to offset some of our energy concerns.”



KYLE GREEN / PORTLAND TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO  
Solar panels soak up the sun as easily as flowers; an expo this month means to educate and encourage clean-energy enthusiasts on the many systems available.

His group has organized the first Northwest Solar Expo (coming to the Oregon Convention Center from Sept. 29 through Oct. 1). The event will offer practical advice to businesses and homeowners who want to learn more about clean-energy solutions through workshops, seminars and 40 exhibitors from all over the Northwest.

With topics ranging from energy efficiency to solar and wind power to financing green-energy installations, organizers say there will be something for everyone.

“We all share a genuine concern for future generations,” Miller says. “Cleaning up our energy portfolio with conservation, efficiency and renewable energy will play an important role in creating a better future that we can all live

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The expo is designed for homeowners as well as contractors and other professionals who want to learn more about harnessing solar energy.



“Awareness and interest in taking control of our energy situation seems to be extremely high right now,” says Kacia Brockman, solar program manager for Energy Trust of Oregon. An expo sponsor, Energy Trust will give workshops to both commercial and residential audiences on incentives and other financial information for installing solar energy systems.




“The incentives are better than they’ve ever been,” Brockman says.



“There is something in everyone’s budget, and technology is available today to create clean energy,” Miller says. “From conservation to efficiency, to participating in a portfolio program that supports renewable energy, to implementing upgrades to your home, to generating hot water, to generating your own clean electricity with a wind or solar electric system, there is something for businesses and homeowners alike.”




Platt Electric, based in Beaverton, is a major sponsor of the expo. “We serve a lot of the contractors in the market,” says John Eddins, Platt’s utility market manager. “We’re seeing more and more of them get involved with high-efficiency or looking at solar. We think it’s a good thing.”




Doug Boleyn, a professional engineer at Cascade Solar Consulting, another expo sponsor, says: “A lot of folks have an impression of only one kind of solar system — maybe a solar water-heating system or solar electric. There are a lot of ways we can convert solar energy into usable clean energy.”




Solar technologies consumers may be unaware of including daylighting and passive solar heating. “It’s not just a one-trick pony,” he says.



Boleyn, a native Oregonian, first got involved with solar power in the 1970s when he built the solar house he still lives in. Today, his business provides consulting services on all aspects of solar energy use.

“Just plainly the promotion of solar is a goal of mine,” he says. “Regardless of whether my business grows, as long as people in greater numbers are aware of and buy solar, that works for me.”

This is the first year for the expo, but organizers already are looking forward to making it an annual event. Future expo locations may include other Northwest cities like Seattle, but Portland was an obvious choice for this inaugural year.

“Portland is very progressive,” Miller says. “This was the first year, so it was important that we have a good showing. Portland has a good background of supporting these kinds of events.”

Miller expects the expo to draw between 5,000 and 10,000 people over the course of the weekend.

The Home Improvement and Remodeling Show will be at the Oregon Convention Center the same weekend, and some sponsors will be exhibiting at both shows.

Speakers and workshop leaders include contractors, engineers and other professionals from Oregon and Washington.

“If you have questions about clean energy, then come to the Solar Expo,” Miller says. “You’ll find answers and solutions that fit your needs.”

*Northwest*

*Solar Expo*

*When: 10 a.m. to*

*7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 29-Oct. 1*

*Where: Oregon Convention Center,*

*777 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.*

*Cost: \$8 per person, per day*

*More: [www.nwsolarexpo.com](http://www.nwsolarexpo.com)*

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**Vital stats**

- Sales (in kilowatt-hours) of green energy nationwide in 2000: 454 million
- Sales (in kilowatt-hours) of green energy nationwide in 2004: 1,839 million
- Percentage of U.S. energy derived from renewable resources in 2004: 6
- Percentage of U.S. energy derived from petroleum in 2004: 40

*Sources: National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Energy Information Administration*

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