

California sets record, surpasses UK, France, Spain in installed solar capacity

By Rhone Resch

If California was a nation, it would rank sixth in the world in installed solar energy capacity. That's pretty amazing – and one of the key takeaways from the latest U.S. Solar Market Insight Report, which was just released by GTM Research and the Solar Energy Industries Association.

Today, California has more solar assets than nations such as the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Australia and Belgium, becoming the first state in the U.S. to top 10,000 megawatts (MW) of installed solar capacity and cementing its place as America's solar leader.

California made history in the first quarter of this year by installing 718 MW of solar energy, raising the state's total capacity to 10,649 MW – enough to power nearly 2.6 million homes. The report went on to point out that California had big increases in Q1 across all solar sectors. Of the new capacity added, 231 MW were residential, 88 MW were commercial and 399 MW were utility scale. Together, these installations represented a \$1.7 billion investment



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Aerial photograph of First Solar Inc.'s Desert Sunlight solar farm in the Mojave Desert.

across the state in the first quarter alone.

When it comes to creating clean energy jobs and protecting the environment, California is showing the world how to get the job done. To put the state's remarkable progress in some context, today California has 10 times more installed solar capacity than the entire nation had in 2007. We congratulate Gov. Jerry Brown, his administration, legislative leaders and the people

of California for being at the forefront of America's efforts to create a vibrant and growing clean energy economy.

California's explosive growth in solar is due, in large part, to stable and effective public policies, such as the federal solar Investment Tax Credit, Renewable Portfolio Standards and Net Energy Metering. Nationwide, solar remains the fastest-growing source of renewable energy in the United States, and it

is supported by nine out of 10 Americans.

In the first quarter of this year, California benefited from the completion of the massive Desert Sunlight project, developed by First Solar and located in the Mojave Desert. Desert Sunlight has the capacity to generate 550 MW of electricity, which is enough to power 160,000 California homes.

The residential market also continued to flourish in Q1, with installed system prices dropping 4 percent year over year – down nearly 50 percent since 2010. The upswing in residential installations is expected to continue in the foreseeable future, especially in light of a recent report by the California Energy Commission, which shows that more than a quarter of all new homes being built in Southern California are being constructed with solar energy systems. Presently, there are 2,226 solar companies at work throughout the state, employing 54,700 Californians – and those numbers are continuing to grow.

Any way you look at it, the sun is shining brightly these days on the Golden State.

— Rhone Resch is president and CEO of the Solar Energy Industries Association.

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