New Solar Research Facility to Study Effects of Challenging Vermont Conditions

The University of Vermont has announced that its new UVM Solar Research and Training Facility at McNeil Generating Station was recently unveiled, energizing the study of the performance and durability of solar panels under often-challenging Vermont conditions: freezing temperatures, heat and humidity, cloud cover, hail, and having their surfaces covered in everything from bird droppings, snow and ice to dust from agriculture and dirt roads.

The facility includes panels purchased as part of a Department of Energy (DOE)-funded UVM research project in the College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences as well as a large number of panel donated by Sandia National Labs from the former DOE/Sandia National Lab solar test site in Williston. The array will serve as a core research facility serving several new research projects and training opportunities and will support the long-term goal of identifying industry partners interested in testing new technologies.

The McNeil facility provides an opportunity to leave the panels “fully exposed to all of the dust, rocks, birds, squirrels – everything that you might expect panels to be exposed to outside,” said Matthew White, a professor in the Department of Physics and co-PI of both the solar installation and research projects. Read more.

Vermont Prepares for $21 Million Federally-Funded EV Charger Build Out

With least 10,000 registered electric vehicles in Vermont and more traveling through, the state is looking to add more EV infrastructure, WCAX reports. “For those times when people may not own their homes, they might not have access to charging in their multi-unit dwelling,” said Patrick Murphy with Vermont Agency of Transportation.

Two years ago Vermont received $21 million in federal funding for EV infrastructure
but Murphy says there have been delays in getting it on the ground. In the meantime, the state has spent $1 million in grants on chargers in multi-unit dwellings, expanding access to 6,200 households. But the goal is to add roughly 80 fast chargers, allowing travelers to never be more than 25 miles away from a fast charger from the highway corridor.

“In each location, people will be able to know that they’ll have at least four fast charging ports that can simultaneously charge at 150 kilowatts versus a really fast amount of charge,” Murphy said.

VTrans expects the first part of that $21 million in federal funding will be in motion by next year. Read more.

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