



Photo Credit/Cutline: Castleford High School juniors Jason Leverich, left, Drake Strickler, center, and Justin Moore hold up new solar panels while a crew installs them on the roof of the school Thursday. The school received the six Sharp 185-watt solar panels through a grant and will collect and generate power for Idaho Power Co. Photo by CORY MYERS/The Times-News

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Castleford School gets solar panels.

By Mickey Walker
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CASTLEFORD -- A pilot project using solar panels at Castleford School is only the start of plans to demonstrate the use of alternative forms of energy.

While the panels will generate electricity to go on the Idaho Power Co. grid, the primary purpose of the project is to demonstrate solar power generation to students and others, backers of the effort said Thursday.

"Basically, the educational component is the biggest part of this system because it teaches students about reusable energy sources, whether it's wind or solar," said John Rosencrantz, owner of Wind Power Unlimited.

Rosencrantz sized the system for the school and along with project coordinator Bill Chisholm ordered the apparatus that was installed on Thursday. A grant from the Bonneville Environmental Foundation for a little over \$12,000 paid for the solar panels and other equipment.

The solar panel system will have the capability of monitoring its own power production and relaying the information to computers in the school, Rosencrantz said. It will break down production on an hourly, daily, weekly and monthly basis.

A wind nanometer will be installed to measure the effect of the wind on the panels, and there will be two temperature sensors and a solar radiation sensor.

Students will be able to monitor all the information provided by the sensors through their school computers.

"The long and short of it is students will have a huge amount of information on how the environment affects our everyday life through the solar cell array," Rosencrantz said.

Dec. 17 is the target date for data to begin flowing through the system after the installation of software and monitoring equipment.

The project started more than a year ago with Chisholm and a representative from Idaho Power performing an energy audit at the Castleford School. Chisholm said the school had taken several steps to reduce its energy use through conservation, but with limited resources it couldn't tackle any large projects.

A requirement of the Bonneville Environmental Foundation's grant is that a project to produce alternative energy can't be used for wasteful consumption.

"Castleford was ahead of the curve in terms of energy conservation, so they became our pilot project," Chisholm said.

"It's no secret that we run on a shoestring budget and we've been pinching energy pennies for some time," school district Superintendent Kelly Murphey said.

The educational applications of the project will initially involve the third and fifth grades and then be expanded to other grades, Murphey said. Curriculum will be science-based, with math and writing applications included.