Wible Lumber Goes Solar in a Mega Way

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South Milford, IN. Wible Lumber Inc, a multi-service manufacturer of hardwood lumber, mouldings, and edge-glued panels, is located about 30 miles north of Fort Wayne, Indiana. One year ago, Wible made a historic decision to build a one million Watt (MegaWatt) solar system. The system is the largest net metering installation tied into Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO) utility. The system went online this past week giving renewable power to Wible and feeding excess power back into the NIPSCO utility.

Wible Lumber owners, Dennis Nowels and David Wible, chose to install the solar system to reduce operating cost and to help the environment. The MegaWatt solar system will save over $162,000 annually. This could power the equivalent of over 16,500 (60 Watt) incandescent light bulbs or 150,000 LED equivalent lights.

Wible Lumber decided they were ready for the next step in energy savings by installing three large solar systems to provide renewable electricity to their operations. They wanted a turn-key, single point installation, so they contracted Renewable Energy Systems (RES) based out of Avilla, IN to do the engineering, construction management, and installation of the project. The engineering began last fall with construction starting in March and completion this October.

The large scale of the project allowed the use of utility grade solar panels and inverters. The inverters change the DC power from the over 3,000 panels into AC power. The systems include revenue grade meters which allows the owners to sell their green power in the Solar Renewable Energy Credit (SREC) market.

The first phase of the project involved mounting over 660 panels to the south facing roofs of 6 large storage buildings. The roof mounted solar arrays generate a maximum of 214,000 Watts.

The second phase of the project involved putting panels on ground mounted arrays. Pilings were installed to allow an additional 2,400 solar panels to be connected to the plant and NIPSCO grid. This portion of the system can generate over 782,000 Watts, bringing the total solar production to nearly 1 million Watts or 1 MegaWatt of power.

The system will last 30+ years generating over 39 million kilowatt hours of power over its lifetime. Solar energy has dramatically lowered in price with the worldwide increase of popularity in clean, renewable power.

Wible Lumber started as a saw mill in the 1920's. Over the decades, the company has expanded operations to service multiple woodworking markets. This includes their own retail hardwood store where customers can pick out their own species of lumber.

In keeping with their green philosophy, Wible has also expanded their kiln drying capacity by using a central boiler system that burns chips and sawdust generated by their own machines. These recycled materials dry the hardwoods to the correct moisture level saving Wible thousands of dollars a month in natural gas.

Renewable Energy Systems, LLC of Avilla, IN is the area's largest engineering and installation solar energy company. RES specializes in systems for residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial applications. The company has been in business since 2008 servicing Northern Indiana, Southern Michigan, and Northwest Ohio.

Renewable Energy Systems (RES) owner, Eric Hesher said, "Businesses and farms are really embracing solar power as it helps reduce monthly operating costs and is eligible for a 30% federal tax credit available until 2019. The systems can be depreciated for additional savings, while also providing a long term stable investment."

The growth in solar has also brought a long term positive environmental impact, as renewables reduce CO_2 (carbon dioxide) emissions from coal fired power plants. The Wible solar system alone will offset 650 tons of CO_2 per year.

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