

# Unprecedented growth seen for solar energy

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The head of the federal government's effort to promote solar technology told about 200 industry leaders yesterday that expanding the industry to the level needed by 2030 will require unprecedented levels of growth.

"To go from the 1 gigawatt of generation capacity that we have now [in the United States] to the 170 to 200 gigawatts called for by 2030 amounts to a 26 percent compounded annual growth rate over the next 20 years," John Lushetsky explained. "That's a higher sustained growth rate than any industry has ever been asked to do before."

Mr. Lushetsky is program manager of the U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Energy Technology Program for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

He was the keynote speaker at a day-long conference in the Dana Center at the University of Toledo's Health Science Campus called "Empowering Solar Energy in Ohio."

The conference drew industry participants from Ohio and Michigan.

Colleen LaChapelle, assistant director of the Wright Center for Photovoltaics Innovation and Commercialization at the University of Toledo, said what started as a small conference grew over the last week in part because of the tremendous opportunity for growth in the industry.

"The resources of our area match up very well to what this industry needs," Ms. LaChapelle said.

Mr. Lushetsky predicted that the solar energy industry -- including manufacturers, suppliers, and distributors -- ultimately could employ 4 million people. But he noted tremendous challenges are involved as the public and private sectors work to incorporate solar energy into a national electrical grid that's in need of its own upgrade.

"We really can't wait for things to happen on their own," Mr. Lushetsky said, explaining how public and private efforts will have to cooperate to incorporate solar into the nation's energy portfolio, including provisions of the federal stimulus package making its way through Congress.

He complimented the efforts done locally and across Ohio to promote and encourage solar companies and their development, citing First Solar Inc. and Xunlight Corp., two solar-panel makers with plants in metro Toledo.

"You've got a very good environment here for startups," he said.

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