

White House goes green with solar panels (Update)

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Tourists gather in front of the White House in Washington, DC, on June 15, 2009. The White House is going green with solar installed on parts of the residence, a US official said Thursday—making good on a pledge that dates back to 2010.

The White House is going green. Solar panels are being installed on parts of the residence, a US official said Thursday—making good on a pledge that dates back to 2010.

With President Barack Obama and his family vacationing in Martha's Vineyard for a week, workers equipped with cranes have been buzzing around the home in downtown Washington.

"The White House has begun installing American-made solar panels on the First Family's residence as a part of an energy retrofit that will improve the overall energy efficiency of the building," the official said.

The work will include the installation of new thermostats and variable-speed fans, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"The project will help demonstrate that historic buildings can incorporate solar energy and energy efficiency upgrades," the official said.

The work makes good on a promise made by the Obama administration nearly three years ago.

In October 2010, then Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced that solar panels would be installed at the White House, in a bid to encourage Americans to adopt the green power generation technology.

Former president Jimmy Carter, a Democrat like Obama, had solar panels installed during his presidency in the late 1970s, during the oil crisis. But his successor Ronald Reagan had them removed.

Since taking office in 2009, Obama has made green energy a priority for his administration, but his efforts have been thwarted by Congress.

He has since used his executive powers to bring in tougher vehicle fuel efficiency standards. In June, he unveiled a new proposal to combat climate change.

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