

Kaiser joins Google, Apple in buying clean energy

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Google and Apple are not the only big companies harnessing California's sunshine and wind to power their workplaces.

Health care giant Kaiser Permanente will announce Wednesday that it has signed deals to buy electricity from a new wind farm to be built at the Altamont Pass, a vast solar plant in Southern California, and more than 100 smaller rooftop solar arrays to be installed at its hospitals, parking garages and medical offices, all of which will reduce its carbon emissions by 30 percent.

"Our primary motivation is that climate change is also a health issue," said Rame Hemstreet, Kaiser's chief [energy](#) officer. "The health impacts are already being experienced by our communities, our members."

The 48-turbine wind farm is the same project Google revealed it was buying energy from last week.

Kaiser and Google have inked 20-year power purchase agreements with Florida-based NextEra Energy, which will use the money to remove more than 700 old [wind turbines](#) from its Altamont property this year and replace them with more efficient machines. The companies will each get about 43 megawatts of power from the new wind farm, known as Golden Hills.

Kaiser also has signed a separate deal with NextEra for 110 megawatts from the Blythe solar energy plant, located in the Riverside County

desert. NextEra is building the solar project and selling off its power in phases, not far from where Kaiser's first medical clinic was founded seven decades ago to treat workers digging the Colorado River Aqueduct.

The Altamont wind farm and Riverside solar plant are the first off-site power buys for Kaiser, the Oakland-based managed [health care](#) network that runs nearly 40 hospitals and hundreds of clinics around the country.

Kaiser also has signed a third deal with NRG Energy, based in Texas and New Jersey, to install rooftop and ground-mounted solar arrays to as many as 170 of its hospitals and other real estate in California. Many of its Bay Area hospitals are likely to benefit from the deal, which will add about 70 megawatts statewide. All of the deals are being signed ahead of the expiration next year of government tax incentives for renewable energy projects.

Kaiser's news follows two big Silicon Valley clean energy disclosures last week: Google's Altamont wind deal and Apple's \$848 million deal to buy power from a solar farm that has yet to be constructed.

While the tech companies need electricity to [power](#) their data centers and corporate campuses, Hemstreet said hospitals are even bigger consumers of energy. The health industry was responsible for about 8 percent of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions last year, he said.

Along with their environmental benefits, wind and solar are increasingly cheap and stable sources of energy that might protect Kaiser from future volatility in the fossil fuel markets.

Hemstreet declined to say how much Kaiser is paying but said it was "very competitive pricing for us."

"We're confident over the course of 20 years, the projects will be, at worst, cost neutral and are likely to save us money and lock in prices, creating certainty," Hemstreet said.

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