

Tesla, Panasonic to make solar cells in Buffalo, New York

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Japanese electronics company Panasonic and U.S. electric car maker Tesla said Tuesday they plan to begin production of solar cells at a factory in Buffalo, New York.

The two companies said they finalized an agreement calling for Tokyo-based Panasonic to pay capital costs for the manufacturing. Palo Alto, California-based Tesla made a "long-term purchase commitment" to Panasonic.

Their statement gave no financial figures.

The factory in Buffalo is under development by SolarCity Corp., a San Mateo, California-based solar panel company owned by Tesla. The photovoltaic cells and modules will be used in solar panels for non-solar roof products and solar glass tile roofs that Tesla plans to begin making, the announcement said.

Production is due to begin in mid-2017. Tesla said it will create 1,400 jobs in Buffalo, 500 in manufacturing and plans further expansion in Buffalo.

Panasonic also is to work with Tesla on next-generation technology, the companies said.

New York state has committed \$750 million to build and outfit the plant at Buffalo's RiverBend site, the centerpiece of Democratic Gov. Andrew

Cuomo's "Buffalo Billion" program to revitalize the upstate region's largest city.

SolarCity has committed to investing \$5 billion over 10 years in New York state, hiring almost 1,500 workers at the Buffalo plant for five years and employing at least 2,000 more people across New York in exchange for use of the state-owned plant.

In October, when word emerged about the possible manufacturing collaboration, the head of New York state's economic development agency said SolarCity will be held to job creation promises made when the state committed funding to build and outfit the plant, which is expected to begin production next summer.

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