

# PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## **Rostraver firm to add 1,500 workers**

Ron DaParma

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Solar Power Industries Inc., a Rostraver company that manufactures solar cells, plans to hire up to 1,500 employees by 2011, a company official said Thursday.

Business is booming, so the company says it will lease 500,000 square feet of space in Sony Corp.'s giant plant in East Huntingdon.

"It's a great story for our company and the region," said Robert L. Lazzari, vice president-resource management for Solar Power Industries.

Lazzari discussed the company's expansion plans at a news conference in Pittsburgh where state officials announced a \$400,000 investment to help the 3 Rivers Clean Energy Partnership develop training programs for workers needed by alternative energy companies in the region.

Recently, German-owned Flabeg Corp. said it expects to eventually employ 300 at a \$30 million plant to be built near Pittsburgh International Airport to make glass and mirror components for solar panels in large-scale solar power plants.

O'Hara-based Converteam, an independent supplier of power-conversion equipment for wind turbines, said it added 100 employees this year and plans to add another 130 through 2009.

Solar Power Industries is building two 30,000-square-foot buildings next to its headquarters in Rostraver so it can start hiring more employees, Lazzari said.

"We currently have about 200 workers at Rostraver, and I will need between 150 and 200 people in each one of those new buildings," he said. "By mid-next year I need a total of 500 people because of the business we are getting. We have long-term contracts that are just waiting for us to expand our production capabilities."

The first building should be open within about two weeks, he said. The second building will be open in December.

Lazzari said Solar Power has leased space that Sony is no longer using at its Westmoreland County television assembly plant.

"We need to expand. I will need another 1,000 people there by 2011," he said.

In February, the state announced \$5.1 million in grants and loans for the company, which pledged to create 396 jobs within three years.

Sony spokesman Michael Koff said Lazzari's statements were "somewhat premature."

"We have been in discussions with them, but there is nothing definite concerning the available space we have here," said Koff. "We are not in a position to say whether an agreement has been finalized or not."

Employment at the Sony plant, once more than 3,000, is down to about 790 after downsizing last year, Koff said. About 1 million square feet of space is available at the complex on a 450-acre site in Hempfield and East Huntingdon. The manufacturing plant contains 2.8 million square feet of space -- 42 acres under roof.

"We've been working with Solar Power because we believe they have tremendous growth potential," said John A. Skiavo, CEO of Economic Growth Connection of Westmoreland. "We've been hoping they will be able to finalize negotiations although I don't think they are quite there yet."

In addition to business in the United States, Solar Power is getting orders from Germany, Spain and China, Lazzari said.

"We make solar panels that go on buildings, and we also make shingles that can go into homes," he said.

In 2007, Solar Power announced a partnership agreement with **Open Energy** Corp., a California renewable energy company, to develop a solar roof able to convert sunlight to electricity and run devices within a home.

The federal Energy Information Administration projects that renewable energy should grow significantly, said EIA analyst Chris Namovicz.

Through July, solar power production in the United States stood at about 80 trillion BTUs, compared to 72 trillion in the same period of 2007, he said.

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