

Newkirk's First Solar Plant Attracts Presidential Attention



An aerial view of the Desoto Next Generation Solar Energy Center, the largest photovoltaic power plant in the nation. Newkirk Electric Associates, Muskegon, was heavily involved in its construction. It's being visited today by President Barack Obama.

The White House is saying that President Obama will visit the largest solar power plant in the United States today when it officially begins producing power for the grid. It's a project that has involved Newkirk Electric Associates of Muskegon.

The Desoto Next Generation Solar Energy Center, owned by Florida Power and Light was built by nearly 400 construction workers, including over 100 employed by Newkirk Electric. The facility will produce 27 megawatts of electricity which is nearly two times as much as the next largest photovoltaic facility in the country.

Newkirk Electric is currently finishing construction on the project and Bill Nash, its project superintendent, may still be on site when the President visits.

Newkirk Electric was responsible for civil, structural and electrical installation for the solar complex. There were more than 90,000 photovoltaic panels to install in six sections with 158 arrays.

The firm was originally awarded the bearing piers, drive piers (for tracker motors), metal erection, photovoltaic panel installation for two of the six of the sections; as well as the concrete foundations for the inverters, metal erection, communication wiring, data collection and AC electrical for all six sections. Over the course of the project, the Newkirk team was asked to bid additional sections with additional scope of work.

It was Newkirk Electric's first solar power plant. The firm has a long history of experience in electrical infrastructure construction and renewable/green energy design and construction. Its projects have included such technologies as biomass, renewable hydroelectric power, landfill generation, and anaerobic digesters or farm waste-to-energy.