

- Special Insert -

Alternative & Renewable Energy

The use of so-called "green" energy is a hot topic in the electrical trade; renewable, alternative and solar projects represent a growing segment of the industry as customers become more interested in ways to save money and reduce energy consumption. This special insert explores some of the ways the electrical trade is "going green".

System 3 Inc. Catches the Renewable Energy Wave

WECA-IEC member contractor System 3 Inc. was founded in 2001 by Tom Wilbert as an electrical contracting company that focused mostly on commercial work. In 2004, System 3 began doing renewable energy work in Sacramento, and that segment of their business has continued to grow. Renewable energy projects now make up the majority of the work System 3 does. Tom Wilbert took a few minutes to speak with WECA about his business.

WECA: What made you interested in starting to work on renewable energy projects?



System 3 Inc. worked on the Oasis Wind Farm in Tehachapi, California.

Tom Wilbert: We'd been doing business in Sacramento since 2001 and had been doing mostly commercial work. In 2004 we saw a bid out on some renewable energy work locally called the Rio Vista Wind Farm and, after exploring the opportunity, we decided to bid on it. We were awarded the subcontract and constructed the project and after seeing the potential growth of that type of work, we started doing more and more of it. Things just continued to grow from that point and now renewable energy makes up the majority of our business.



System 3 Inc. founder Tom Wilbert working on a wind turbine tower at the Roscoe Wind Farm in Roscoe, Texas.

WECA: Are most of the renewable energy projects you work on local or in other parts of the country?

TW: Most are outside of California, predominantly in Texas. We do a lot of wind projects in Texas; because of the weather and the land mass, the

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Texas landscape lends itself to being a good location for wind farms.

WECA: *What would you say is the most interesting or unique renewable energy project you've worked on?*

TW: We helped build the largest wind farm in North America which is located in central Texas. The project consisted of the tower wiring, collection system, and several substation and utility interconnect yards.

WECA: *What is the most appealing aspect of doing renewable energy projects as such a big part of System 3's business?*

TW: We're helping build the future of American energy and eliminate our dependence on foreign oil. We're helping produce large quantities of clean, renewable energy, and that's exciting to be a part of.

WECA: *What would your advice be to other contractors interested in expanding into renewable energy projects?*

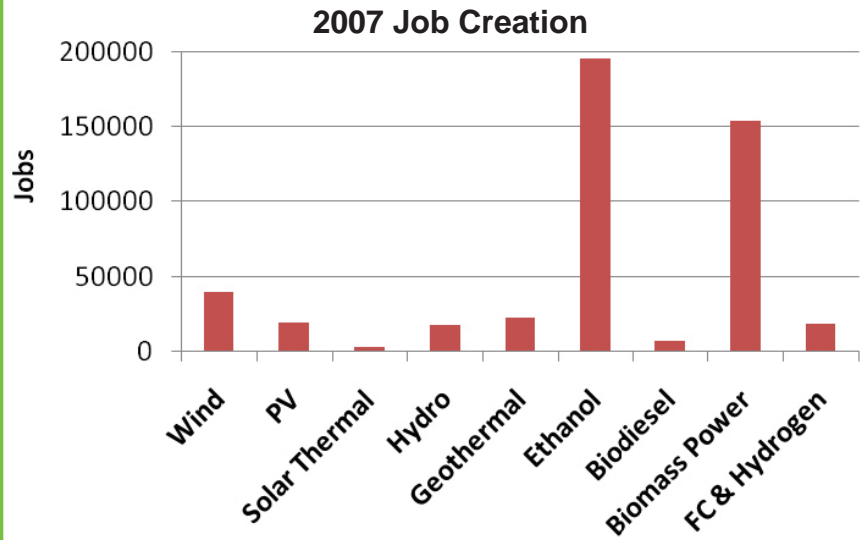
TW: My advice would be to attend some of the trade shows that are available, they seem to have good information.



A turbine at the Buffalo Gap Wind Farm in Buffalo Gap, Texas.

Job and Revenue Growth in Renewable Energy Sectors

The chart below, from a December 2008 report on the growth of renewable energy industries by The American Solar Energy Society and Management Information Services, Inc., shows the total number of jobs generated by the renewable energy sectors in 2007.



While recent job creation is dominated by ethanol and biomass power, followed far behind by wind, geothermal, photovoltaics, and hydro sectors, the chart below (from the same report) shows solar and photovoltaic (PV) have seen the highest revenue increases.

