



Photo courtesy of Old Dominion Freight Lines/Vault Logistics

Old Dominion Freight Line installed solar panels on the roof of its building to take advantage of a more cost-effective power source.

Significance in Solar Energy

Leading the way in “Green” Power Generation

In recent years, North Carolina has been shining light on the benefits of alternative energy sources. In 2007, state legislators passed a law that required 12.5 percent of retail electricity demand be met by renewable and conservation programs by the year 2021. Just 10 years shy of that date, the program showed such success that industry advocates suggested that the amount of sun-powered electricity required by law be doubled.

Regardless of whether the law passes, the Tar Heel state’s commitment to renewables is already evident. Nowhere is it more so than in Davidson County, which is home to one of the largest solar farms in the Southeast. All of the output from the 17.2-megawatt station, built by SunEdison, is bought by Duke Energy, which passes it on to its 2.4 million customers throughout the Carolinas.

The 200-acre solar farm consists of more than 63,000 photovoltaic solar panels and can generate 28 million kilowatt-

hours annually, which is more than enough to power 2,600 homes.

Wright of Thomasville also installed solar panels on the roof of its company headquarters. The project will significantly improve efficiency and the company expects a return on its investment within four years.

In Thomasville, Old Dominion Freight Line recently installed solar panels on the 160,000-square-foot roof of its warehouse, making it the third largest solar panel project in the state. The 1.8-megawatt system is expected to offset more than 90 percent of the building’s annual energy expenditures.

With equipment costs for these technologies continuing to fall and the fact that North Carolina provides many tracts of open ground suitable for solar farms, industry experts believe the state can eventually provide up to 22 gigawatts of power from the sun annually, enough to supply more than 21 percent of its current electricity use. ■ *By Ryan Newhouse*