

# Institute gets more funding for solar work

By M. Therese Shakra

For the Sun-News

**R**enewable energy from any potential source requires adaptability for the current



system in electrical production and delivery. Critical to these requirements are the electrical codes and standards that ensure safety of the users, installers and operators.

New Mexico State University's Southwest Technology Development Institute, a part of the Institute for Energy and the Environment, is leading such an effort and was recently awarded continued funding from the U.S. Department of Energy for leadership and operation of the Solar America Board for Codes and Standards (Solar ABCs). The new funding of \$1.75 million brings the award for this five-year program to \$5.95 million.

Led by the Technology Development Institute, the Solar ABCs is a 10-member consortium of public and private entities that develops national and international codes and standards to support part of the emerging renewable energy industry. Standards-making bodies set priorities on technical issues and uniform characteristics of products and services around the world. Performance and safety param-



Courtesy photo

**New Mexico State University's Institute for Energy and the Environment program manager John Wiles** inspects a DC Combiner box for code compliance at a parking structure at the Naval Air Station on Coronado Island near San Diego. Wiles was recently recognized through the American Solar Energy Society for distinctive service in the advancement of solar energy use via research, education and public service.

eters are paramount in any developing industry.

"Standards are a part of the foundation in building the green revolution," said Abbas Ghassemi, IEE Director. "They facilitate implementation of innovative renewable technologies with impact on economic, technical, societal and environmental development." He said energy performance

requirements benefit the national economy, consumer welfare, jobs and income for regional commerce, and overall climate goals. These innovative solutions inevitably enhance policy and growth in international areas as well.

During the past two years, the Solar ABCs have produced major reports for policy makers, utility plan-

ners, engineers and solar designers to use in their decision-making processes. Each report examines a different concern or barrier posed by current codes or policies and outlines specific actions to reduce or eliminate the problem.

The Solar ABCs last year completed a gap analysis, which surveyed hundreds of solar energy stakehold-

ers to define their barriers to the use of photovoltaics in the United States.

"The gap analysis was critical to planning the Solar ABCs' activities for the remaining tenure of this program. The issues we identified include concerns with advanced metering, building and electrical codes, and fire safety and performance ratings, among

others," said Andrew Rosenthal, senior program manager for the Technology Development Institute. "We distilled their responses to the 10 most pressing needs, and that constitutes our marching orders for the next few years."

Solar ABCs grew out of the Solar America Initiative, a technology and market transformation program to accelerate widespread commercialization of clean solar energy technologies by 2015. Learn more about Solar ABCs at [solarabc.org](http://solarabc.org).

Another example of NM-SU's leadership in this Year of Sustainability is demonstrated by the upcoming energy conference, "Re-Energize America: Policy, Practice and Possibility for America's Energy Future." The summit is co-hosted with U.S. Rep. Harry Teague (D-N.M.) on campus Aug. 31 to Sept. 1.

The Institute for Energy and the Environment is comprised of WERC: A Consortium for Environmental Education and Technology Development, CEMRC, the Carlsbad Environmental Monitoring and Research Center, and the Southwest Technology Development Institute. For information, contact Ghassemi at (575) 646-2038 or visit [iee.nmsu.edu](http://iee.nmsu.edu).

**"Eye on Research" is provided by New Mexico State University. This week's feature was written by M. Therese Shakra of the Institute for Energy and the Environment at New Mexico State University.**