

TT  
9/23/06

## GROVER BEACH: VOLER TEAM APPAREL GOES SOLAR



TRIBUNE PHOTO BY JAYSON MELLOM

Mark Soovajian, right, and William Miller install solar panels at Voler Team Apparel in Grover Beach on Thursday. About 180 solar panels, covering 5,000 square feet, were installed atop the roof as part of the \$300,000 project.

# Plugging into the rays of the sun

By TONYA STRICKLAND  
tstrickland@thetribunenews.com

**A** Grover Beach manufacturer is one of several county businesses harnessing the sun's powerful rays.

Voler Team Apparel, the maker of cycling clothing, will now power the main building of its factory with a boost of clean energy from 180 newly installed solar panels, covering 5,000 square feet of rooftop. It is the largest system installation for Pacific Energy Co., said Susan Mullen, business manager for the San Luis Obispo firm.

The \$300,000 panel system will generate 30,000 kilowatts and reduce the plant's overall power consumption by approximately 30 percent, which is about a \$35,000 savings on its electric bill each year, said Jim Helser, sales and marketing manager for Voler Team Apparel.

The company's \$300,000 system will generate about one-third of the power it needs to operate and \$35,000 a year in savings

The main building of the three-building factory was chosen for the panels because it has the site's largest energy consumer — an image-transfer heat press.

"We're thrilled," Helser said. "The savings is great in itself, but we truly use an enormous amount of energy so anything we can do to cut back and use this renewable energy source is amazing."

With the help of the California Energy Commission solar rebate system, in addition to the 30 percent federal tax credit for businesses using solar electric systems, the company will get 40 percent of initial expenses back instantly.

"Basically that brings the out-of-pocket cost down to \$170,000 to

\$180,000, in total," Helser said.

Ryan Park, commercial sales manager for REC Solar in San Luis Obispo, said more and more "businesses are turning to solar power because it's making financial sense."

The local wine industry is already taking part in this alternative energy trend.

Solar panels have emerged at Tablas Creek Vineyards, L'Aventure, Alban Vineyards and Castoro Cellars.

Other businesses using the sun to power up include San Luis Obispo's Palm Theatre and the San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District.

Burke & Pace Lumber Sales in Arroyo Grande will have a 103-panel system installed in a few weeks.