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Douglas School District to celebrate completion of Wind for Schools Project with open house on Feb. 9

BOX ELDER, S.D. – February 4, 2009 – Douglas School District will host an open house and ribbon cutting at 3:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 9, to celebrate the installation of a 2.4-kilowatt wind generator as a part of the national Wind for Schools Project.

The Box Elder-based school district partnered with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission (SDPUC), South Dakota State University's Wind Application Center and Black Hills Power on the Wind for Schools Project at Douglas High School.

"I believe the Wind for Schools Project provides an excellent opportunity for our students and staff to study renewable energy," Dr. Loren Scheer, Superintendent for the Douglas School District, said. "The current generation of students will be entrusted with the task of helping move the United States from a fossil fuel dominated society to a society that develops and uses more renewable energy sources.

"Having a wind turbine on our campus provides our staff and students an opportunity to study first hand what renewable energy can do for this country. In addition, it will enhance their understanding of the impact using fossil fuel energy sources versus renewable energy sources have on our environment."

The wind turbine generator installed at Douglas High School is a Skystream 3.7 wind generator supplied by Southwest Windpower, Inc., of Flagstaff, Ariz. The Skystream 3.7 sits atop a 60-foot monopole tower located near the southeast corner of the Douglas High School campus.

The wind generator was energized on Friday, Jan. 23, after personnel from GenPro Energy Solutions and PowerPlus Electric of Piedmont assembled the unit and helped Black Hills Power raise the generator and tower and secure it to its base.

Students will be able to monitor the amount of energy generated by the wind turbine on a real-time basis from their classroom through a wireless Bluetooth connection between the Skystream 3.7 and a classroom-based computer using software provided by Southwest Windpower. The Douglas School District web site — www.dsdk12.net — will soon have updates of the status of the wind turbine's performance.

“This Wind for Schools Project is such a great opportunity for students at Douglas,” Dusty Johnson, Chairman of the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission, said. “As the wind industry expands, particularly in South Dakota, we realize how important it is to equip students with an understanding of wind energy. In a few years these students will be the ones installing and maintaining wind turbines. I hope this project is the beginning of an exciting time for Douglas.”

“The Wind for Schools Project will give the students and teachers at Douglas a great hands-on learning experience in the growing field of wind energy,” Don Martinez, Energy Services Engineer at Black Hills Power, said. “They will play a vital role in bringing renewable energy to a grassroots level in Box Elder. This is a project and energy source both the school and community can embrace.”

The South Dakota PUC coordinated the Wind for Schools application process, while the NREL provided a resource and site assessment for Douglas School District. The South Dakota Wind Application Center at South Dakota State University conducted an analysis of the site at Douglas High School and oversaw installation of the wind generator and equipment.

Wind Powering America and the NPEL launched the Wind for Schools program in 2005. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the program’s goal is to raise awareness of wind energy and to develop a knowledge base on renewable energy sources in future leaders.

Douglas is one of eight South Dakota school districts selected to receive a wind turbine under the Wind for Schools Project.

Other South Dakota schools chosen to get wind turbine generators under the Wind for Schools Project are Sanborn Central, located in Forestburg; Faith, Selby Area, Aberdeen, Elkton, Stanley County and Sioux Falls’ Memorial Middle School.

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