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NEWS

Storm damage delays completion of Minnesota Power solar power plant at National Guard's Camp Ripley

Duluth, Minn. — Completion of Minnesota Power's first solar power plant is delayed after a severe storm Wednesday night caused substantial damage to the nearly completed solar array at the National Guard's Camp Ripley base near Little Falls, Minnesota.

Initial assessments indicate 25 percent of the 97 rows of solar panels sustained damage, including twisted and broken racks that hold the solar panels in place, broken solar panels and damaged wiring. The solar panels were crushed by a large storage container and other debris blown into the array by high winds.

Minnesota Power had representatives at Camp Ripley this morning ensuring the site is physically and environmentally safe, contacting insurers and beginning to plan for repair or replacement of damaged components. The last solar panels were scheduled to be installed at the facility today.

Al Hodnik, president, chairman and CEO of ALLETE, Minnesota Power's parent company, said the company will complete its original Camp Ripley vision for a 10-megawatt solar power plant that will create enough electricity to power 1,700 homes per year.

"It's an unfortunate delay to the project, but we are confident we'll rebuild and bring this renewable partnership with the National Guard back to its fullest potential," he said. "This solar power plant is a key component of Minnesota Power's EnergyForward strategy to add renewable energy to our energy mix while transforming the nation's energy landscape working in partnership with Camp Ripley, Little Falls and Morrison County."

When complete, the $25 million project will be the largest solar power plant on any National Guard base in the nation, covering an area the size of about 62 football fields. The array was designed and built to American Society of Civil Engineers structural codes to withstand 105 mph winds and the panels are tested to withstand the impact of golf ball sized hail.

At most times, the energy generated by the solar power plant will be sent to all Minnesota Power customers. The array also is designed to allow Camp Ripley to use the solar energy during emergencies when the power grid is down, providing enhanced energy security for the military site.

Construction of the solar array began in May at the National Guard's 53,000-acre regional training facility, which also sustained damage in the storm. Minnesota Power contracted with M+W Group, a global engineering and construction company, to build the array; Hunt Electric is the primary subcontractor.

The solar array is part of a broader partnership between Minnesota Power and the National Guard. In an agreement signed in 2014, Minnesota Power and the National Guard signed an agreement to

increase renewable energy production and identify ways Camp Ripley could reduce its energy use and enhance energy security.

The power plant will provide Minnesota Power, a utility division of ALLETE Inc. (NYSE: ALE), about one-third of its requirement under the state's Solar Energy Standard. The Minnesota Solar Energy Standard, enacted in 2013 by the Minnesota Legislature, requires 1.5 percent of a public utility's applicable retail sales to come from solar energy sources by 2020.

A planned Sept. 16 event to celebrate the unique renewable energy partnership at Camp Ripley and the completion of major construction at the solar power plant will be rescheduled for spring 2017.

Minnesota Power provides electric service within a 26,000-square-mile area in northeastern Minnesota, supporting comfort, security and quality of life for 144,000 customers, 16 municipalities and some of the largest industrial customers in the United States. More information can be found at www.mnpower.com.

The statements contained in this release and statements that ALLETE may make orally in connection with this release that are not historical facts, are forward-looking statements. Actual results may differ materially from those projected in the forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements involve risks and uncertainties and investors are directed to the risks discussed in documents filed by ALLETE with the Securities and Exchange Commission.