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Longmont, Colorado
Tue Oct 07 2008



Publish Date: 10/4/2008

Solar Week features energy-smart home

Workshops will cover money-saving and green techniques

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BOULDER — The center of attention at this year's Solar Week, hosted by the Center for ReSource Conservation, is Andrew McKenna's smart home, which runs off energy-saving grid-point technology.

Grid-point technology allows homeowners to control every aspect of energy use within their home.

"It is going to be the stop to go to," CRC Energy Division director Debbie Fox said of the 14-home tour it will hold Sunday.

The 13th annual event also features a free expo Sunday at 2639 Spruce St. and will then continue into the week with nine sustainability workshops throughout Boulder County from Monday through Thursday.

Also at the expo will be Xcel Energy's 64-foot SmartGrid experience truck, which demonstrates how its SmartGrid plan will work and how McKenna's home will someday fit into Xcel's plan.

After the expo, for \$10, attendees can tour the 13 other green homes and visit McKenna's grid-point home.

Through the grid-point system, energy use is monitored by a central computer in the home. A Web interface allows homeowners to view the data and make decisions about their energy use, McKenna said.

Homeowners also can set profiles that determine when utilities and circuits are on during certain times of the day, he said.

"It makes energy usage visible and gives the homeowner the ability to make decisions based on that



Bella Energy co-founder and vice president Andrew McKenna demonstrates the smart energy system in his home. The technology lets homeowners control every aspect of their energy use. **Courtesy Andrew McKenna**

Solar Week Expo

What: Show case of 38 solar businesses and organizations, and a home tour

When: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sunday

Where: Center for ReSource Conservation, 2639 Spruce St., Boulder

Cost: The expo is free; the home tour costs \$10.

Information: For information about the expo, home tour and workshops, visit www.conservationscenter.org/e_solarweek.htm.

visibility,” said McKenna, the co-founder and vice president of Bella Energy.

McKenna is one of the first in Boulder County to use the technology in his home. He said 10 houses in the area now use the technology, with some receiving financial help from Xcel Energy.

Xcel hopes to someday use this technology, through its SmartGrid plan, in all homes to create an accurate picture of energy use, McKenna said.

He said it could relieve stress on electric grids, help lower energy use in homes and maybe even lower energy costs.

Fox said she hopes homeowners will become inspired by McKenna’s home.

All next week, the CRC will offer workshops that will help put the inspiration into action, Fox said.

The workshops will cover various money-saving and green techniques, such as how to do an energy audit; outdoor water conservation; and how to finance a green project.

“There will also be a workshop held in Longmont that offers Spanish translation on energy efficiency,” Fox said. “We will teach residents how to reduce energy bills.”

That workshop will be from 6 to 8 p.m. Oct. 8 at the Longmont Senior Center.

Fox said she hopes the workshops help homeowners become aware of the many ways to conserve energy and save money.

“With energy prices going up, this is the year people are going to look for answers that fit within their lifestyle ... and we are giving them every type of answer we can,” she said.

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