

Solar plant to be constructed at UA Tech Park

By Tom Beal Arizona Daily Star | Posted: Tuesday, January 19, 2010 10:50 am

A Rochester, N.Y. energy company will build a \$32 million solar thermal plant at the University of Arizona's Tech Park as the first step in what UA officials hope will be a 200-acre zone devoted to solar research, manufacturing and training.

Bell Independent Power Corp. says its "innovative technology" will produce power from the sun that is reliable and "cost-competitive with fossil fuel energy."

Key to the 5-million watt system is a thermal storage component that will allow it to produce electricity for several hours after the sun sets, or is obscured by clouds.

Bell proposed the system to Tucson Electric Power, which has signed a contract to buy the plant's power for the next 20 years. The financial arrangement, which will use a renewable-energy tariff collected from TEP's customers, awaits approval by the Arizona Corporation Commission.

Construction of the facility, expected to be completed by May of next year, will temporarily employ 75 people and seven workers will be needed to operate the plant, according to a release from Bell, TEP, the Tech Park and Tucson Regional Economic Opportunities (TREO).

