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Solar Direct and TCT Solar Announce First Joint Solar Water Heating Solution Designed for Commercial Applications

New product solution code-named "Azteca" merges proven, reliable solar water heating technology with commercial packaging

Solar World Congress, Orlando – August 10, 2005 – Solar Direct and TCT Solar today announced they are jointly developing and planning to offer a new commercial solution, code-named "Azteca", that will help pave the way for volume purchases of solar water heating (SWH) solutions. "Azteca" will link Solar Direct's value-added engineering expertise with TCT Solar's highly reliable ProgressivTube® technology. With this joint venture, Solar Direct and TCT Solar aim to make SWH more accessible to large-scale commercial and industrial projects, such as multi-unit residential and hot water intensive industries (e.g. Hospitality, Agricultural, and Food Processing).

"Azteca" is designed to answer the specialized needs of commercial customers whose multi-unit SWH systems require (1) high reliability, supporting up to 24/7 application use, (2) the solar energy use can be measured in equivalent electrical kw-hrs and (3) the equipment is supported by commercial-grade customer service. "Azteca" also differs from the conventional stand-alone SWH residential products in the following ways:

- An "Azteca" SWH unit is part of a minimum quantity 20 unit system installation.
- A meter is integrated into the system, either to an individual SWH unit or to an array of SWH units.
- A back-up system is integrated into the base-system platform.
- A PV-based power source for the metering, making the system completely energy-independent.

By integrating "net metering" into the "Azteca" solution, where the thermal energy production is expressed in kw-hrs, the environmental and social attributes of the energy can be traded like those from other green generation sources (e.g. Solar PV, wind energy, etc.).



This means owners of "Azteca" SWH systems will be able to calculate in real-time the demand reduction of fossil-fuel based electricity associated with their investment as well as include solar tradable renewable energy credits (TREC's) as a component of their project financing and ROI.

Jeff Curry, of Lakeland Electric, a Florida utility, pioneered the use of TREC's. He is a strong supporter of using TREC's with Solar Thermal applications, and heralded the "Azteca" plan as a "major step in bringing viable solar energy technology to the commercial marketplace."

The "Azteca" solution builds upon the well-established ProgressivTube® technology which supports:

- The Industry's Lowest Operating and Maintenance Costs. ProgressivTube's® highly reliable design, with no moving parts, allows a product life expectancy of 30 years and has a 10-year warranty.
- Certification to all key SWH standards including those of the Florida Solar Energy Center (FSEC), HUD International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO), Solar Rating and Certification Corporation (SRCC), and the State of Florida wind loading requirements.
- The product is among the highest rated SWH systems as indicated by independent rating services due to its unitary Integral Collector System (ICS) design.
- A Flexible, Scaleable Design that Grows with Your Business. Ideal for process/industrial applications, SWH units are modular, easily chained together to produce N-unit arrays, allowing a business to expand their hot water capacity as needed.

As part of their role in the venture, Solar Direct will perform value-added engineering in the form of:

- Integration of the metering and back-up components of "Azteca".
- Evaluation and design optimization to ease the installation process.
- Support of E-commerce front-end and online first tier customer support.
- On site project management and turnkey installation services.

In turn, TCT Solar will support "Azteca" customers by:

- Offering their Commercial Leasing Program.
- Supporting accelerated delivery of systems.
- Maintaining second and third tier customer support services for businesses requiring minimal downtime and/or where guaranteed hot water availability is mission-critical to a commercial, multi-residential or industrial application.

As part of this expanded partnership, Solar Direct and TCT have agreed to co-market the value-added product solution.



The new product solution is slated for availability to select customers for early access during the 4th quarter of calendar year 2005, with full roll-out in 2006.

"For the first time in the 100-year history of Solar Water Heating, the Industry is now entering a market-driven phase," said Dale Gulden, CEO of Solar Direct, "This is fueled by several factors: heightened concern over energy price hikes, education via the green building movement, and more recently, the emergence of 'Green Marketing' programs."

"With 'Azteca', we offer customers a 'ready-to-go' package," said Steve Gorman, President and CEO of TCT Solar. "The economics of SWH, particularly for 20+ unit installations, now allows self-financing via the fossil-fuel electricity reduction (enabling credit for environmental compliance), marketable securities (through TREC's) and, in most geographies, rebates and other incentives."

Solar Direct and TCT Solar have been working together to deliver SWH solutions to customers for two decades, including design of solar water plant systems to the U.S. Embassy in Nigeria and U.S. Coast Guard in Puerto Rico.

About Solar Direct

A pioneer in the world of energy conservation products since 1986, Solar Direct began with a focus on residential and commercial systems including solar thermal and geothermal heat pumps. On the consumer-side, Solar Direct hosts the Internet's fastest growing Energy Product SuperMall, www.SolarDirect.com, offering over 350 energy-efficient leisure and appliance products to home-owners throughout all 50 states. The company's flagship product, the Vortex™ Solar Pool Heating solution, is nationally known for its home-owner-friendly self-installation, product reliability and high customer satisfaction ratings.

About TCT Solar

From its headquarters in Jacksonville, Florida, TCT Solar manufactures the **PROGRESSIVTUBE®** passive solar water heating system. TCT Solar (www.TCTSolar.com) markets its products and systems in more than 75 countries and has a workforce of approximately 15 employees. Over the past two decades, thousands of homeowners and businesses have enjoyed the benefits of the **PROGRESSIVTUBE®**. It has earned a reputation of high reliability, durable design and low maintenance. **PROGRESSIVTUBE®** is considered the most "Obvious Technology®" in solar.

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