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Cinco Solar inks distribution pact with China-based firm

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San Antonio-based Cinco Solar Inc. is moving forward with its effort to help both residents and business owners go green.

The company recently announced it is now a distributor for Apricus Solar Co. Ltd. and will market the company's solar hot water system in the state of Texas.

Apricus Solar is a global company based in Nanjing, China, and manufactures systems that uses the sun's energy to heat both water and to provide heat for homes or commercial buildings.

"It's a great product," says Hollis Fitch III, CEO of Cinco Solar. "We are pursuing large-scale commercial hot water applications and there are a number of those where this technology is suitable."

According to Andy Goldstein, market developing manager with Apricus Solar, his company's product is scalable and is ideal for applications from small residential spaces to large industrial buildings.

"Because of the scalability, individual homeowners can go solar and big companies can make that choice as well," Goldstein says.

Cinco Solar was founded in 2007 in response to the growing interest in renewable energy. The company designs and installs high-quality renewable energy systems for both commercial, industrial and residential customers.

Hot, hot, hot

Fitch says he is excited about the new relationship with Apricus Solar and hopes that using solar gains more momentum in Texas.

"There seems to be less knowledge about solar (in Texas) and Apricus is going the extra mile by establishing distributors in this region," he says. "The product is available and we are letting people know that solar is here."

Solar hot water systems are made up of solar thermal collectors, a fluid system to move the heat from the collector to its point of usage, and a reservoir or tank for heat storage and subsequent use.

"We have so much sunlight down here it just makes sense," Fitch says of using solar technology in Texas. "Not enough people know about it."

Goldstein says his company has made a commitment to get the word out about solar thermal systems

and educated both residents and business owners about the savings and the positive effect it has on the environment.

Fitch says that many electric utility companies, like CPS Energy, offer rebates for solar systems. Goldstein adds there are also federal tax savings available.

According to CPS Energy's Web site, the utility offers rebates to businesses that install energy-saving systems to help defer the cost of solar equipment.

The cost to install a basic solar thermal system on an average home starts at about \$6,500, Fitch says.

"We stock the product locally and we are training our dealers so they know how to install these systems and we hope that when we connect the dots the demand will increase," Fitch says. "We want people to know that it is here, it works and it will save them lots of money."

Target market

Fitch says there are many business that could benefit from the technology including hotels, laundromats and the food industry.

"Both dairy farmers and dairy bottlers use tons of hot water," Fitch says. "That is an opportunity for us."

The fledgling company is in the process of building its clientele and so far counts the Army Residence Community in San Antonio as its largest customer.

Fitch says there are also several niche areas that use large amounts of hot water, especially those with a need for water between 150 degees and 175 degrees, that would give his company growth opportunities.

"Who would of thought that right here in San Antonio, (The Boeing Company) is using hundreds of thousands of gallons to wash aircraft," he says. "So there are lots of businesses out there that use hot water."

Fitch says it is critical for larger industrial companies to look at solar thermal systems for heating water.

He adds that more of those companies are looking for ways to cut production costs and solar is a good answer.

"There are a lot of industrial processes out there that don't need really high temp water," he says. "They can work with 150 degree to 175 degree water which is ideal for solar thermal water systems."