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Contact: Dean Boyer
Director of Communications
Washington Public Utility Districts Association
(360) 741-2676

Note: Pictures of the WPUDA building are available on request

Washington PUD Association headquarters earns LEED Platinum rating from U.S. Green Building Council

The Washington Public Utility Districts Association's new solar-powered headquarters building in Olympia has received "Platinum" certification under the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program.

The WPUDA headquarters, which boasts the largest rooftop solar installation in the state, is the first new-construction office building in Washington to achieve Platinum certification – the highest possible rating under the LEED program.

The LEED Green Building Rating System is a voluntary, nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance "green" buildings. The program recognizes sustainability in five areas of human and environmental health: site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

WPUDA is a trade association representing 27 public utility districts across the state that provide electricity, water and sewer services and wholesale telecommunications to more than 1.5 million people. Public utility districts are customer-owned utilities governed by locally elected boards of commissioners.

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“We are thrilled that the U.S. Green Building Council has recognized our efforts to design and build a headquarters building that reflects our PUD members’ commitment to conservation, energy efficiency and renewable resources,” said WPUDA Executive Director Steve Johnson.

When WPUDA decided to move its offices from Seattle to Olympia, it hired Olympic Associates Co. as project manager. Olympic Associates put together a “design-build” team led by Mountain Construction and the Helix Design Group. Other design-build team members were Sunset Air, Sitts & Hill Engineers, Electric Systems, Tacoma Plumbing and Smith Fire Systems.

The result is a distinctive, two-story office building in the 200 block of Union Avenue, within view of the state Capitol. WPUDA occupies the second floor, with lease space below.

The project, which broke ground in August 2006, received a substantial boost toward LEED Platinum certification when REC Silicon – a Grant County-based subsidiary of the REC Group and the world’s largest producer of high-grade polysilicon for use in solar panels and computers – agreed to donate 160 solar panels for the building.

Even on overcast days, the 34-kilowatt solar installation generates more than enough electricity to meet the building’s daytime needs, with the surplus sold to Puget Sound Energy through net metering.

The 11,000-square-foot WPUDA building also scored points under the LEED ratings system for using Forest Stewardship Council-certified lumber, high efficiency glass manufactured by Cardinal Glass Industries in Tumwater, and low vapor-emitting materials, including paint, carpet and adhesives. A flowing water feature in front of the building recycles rainwater collected from the roof.

In February, Gov. Christine Gregoire chose the new WPUDA headquarters to formally accept a report from her Climate Advisory Team on ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the state, praising the association and its PUD members for their foresight in promoting energy efficiency and solar power.

For more information about the WPUDA headquarters building, go to www.wpuda.org. The building is also available for small group tours by calling (360) 741-2675.

