

Governor praises business modeling clean energy technologies

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BRANCHBURG, N.J. (AP) — Gov. Jon S. Corzine said Tuesday that other businesses should follow the lead of a construction company which has been cited for its innovations in using clean energy and energy efficiency technology.

The governor toured the headquarters of Ferreira Construction, where management has used a combination of solar panels and energy-efficiency measures to create a "net zero electric energy building."

The technologies allow the 42,000-square-foot building to generate enough electricity to meet all of its own needs.

"I've got to tell you, I'm impressed," said Corzine. "What we've got to do is take this on a much larger scale. ... This is economically advantageous in the long run."

The governor's visit comes on the heels of a quick trip to Portugal, where he signed a cooperative agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

New Jersey is one of three states, along with California and Hawaii, to enact laws mandating the reduction of greenhouse gases, which scientists consider a leading cause of global warming.

Under New Jersey's law, signed by Corzine in July, the state must reduce global warming gases 20 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050.

The Ferreira building, which opened in May 2006, was a regular office building that was retrofitted by the company to be more energy efficient. In addition to the solar panels on the roof that create electricity, the company uses solar energy to heat water, has installed an energy-efficient boiler, and has a monitoring system that allows people in the building to see where energy is being used and make adjustments accordingly.

The solar panels and energy-efficient technologies cost almost \$2.5 million combined, part of which the company recouped through grants from the state's Board of Public Utilities.

"At first I thought 'You're crazy! Get lost,'" said the company's owner, Nelson Ferreira, describing his reaction when first approached by company managers about ways to make the building environmentally friendly. But Ferreira said he was eventually won over. "It works. I'm happy and proud that we did it."

The company initially expected the clean energy investment would be paid off in seven to eight years. But company officials said that because energy prices are rising and the company is constantly improving its system, they're now expecting a five- to seven-year payoff.