

Sasebo's new solar panels helping Navy base reduce its carbon footprint

SASEBO NAVAL BASE, Japan — About a year ago, officials placed the base's [first energy-saving solar panels](#) atop some buildings. On Thursday, they celebrated the one-year anniversary by adding 333 more to the Navy Exchange's roof.

The 76.59 kilowatt photovoltaic system is designed to generate approximately 80 percent of the building's power during peak daytime hours, according to Sasebo's energy manager Jonathan Currie.

When fully operational, the system will generate 100 megawatt hours of energy annually, Currie said, or the annual consumption of nine homes in the U.S.

The base's movie theater and public works buildings were the first facilities on base to don the panels.

The new system, which was christened during a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday, brings the total number of panels on base to 725, or enough energy for 18 homes.

At first glance, the savings will seem minimal considering the base's huge electric bill, Currie said. But coupled with future measures, the systems could reduce the base's \$600,000 bill in monthly fees, which doesn't include utility costs, in addition to its carbon footprint. In September, base officials will launch a yearlong wind turbine feasibility study at one of the outlying fuel facilities.

Currie smiled as the sun beat down on the Japanese contractors and base personnel at Thursday's ceremony, forcing them to scramble for the shade.

"The NEX is probably getting all of their power from the panels right now," he said. "They're off the grid."

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