

Wind energy industry installs 8,358 megawatts of capacity

Jan. 29 -- The U.S. wind energy industry installed a record 8,358 megawatts of new generating capacity in 2008, enough to serve more than two million homes, but is uncertain what 2009 will bring due to the ongoing financial crisis.

The 2008 growth increased the nation's total wind power generating capacity by 50%, according to the American Wind Energy Association. Iowa surpassed California as the second largest state in terms of installed capacity with 2,790 megawatts. Texas remained on top with 7,116 megawatts of generation capacity.

But financing for new projects is up in the air as orders for wind turbine components has slowed and layoffs have begun to hit the wind turbine manufacturing industry, according to the AWEA. About 85,000 people are employed by the U.S. wind power industry. About 8,000 of those are construction jobs.

"Our numbers are both exciting and sobering," said Denise Bode, CEO of the AWEA.

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