

No Scare from Industrial Project Teaching Environmental Lesson

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When you hear the world's largest industrial project of its kind was recently installed in Oxnard, you may not immediately think this is a story of environmental improvement.

However, when you know the company behind the project is called "Edisun," you may begin to suspect the clever solar-themed pun signals an initiative more like one of the friendly and creative Halloween costumes you might see on kids who come to your door, and less like the scary ones you might see in a theme park haunted house.

Unintentionally adding to the lightheartedness of the story, the announcement of this project was made in a press release quoting the general contractor in charge of the construction, whose name happens to be Rusty Wood.

Wood, Vice President of West Hills Construction, Inc, worked with other partners to install Edisun Microgrids panels on top of the Chiquita Brands International warehouse in Oxnard. But this project, announced just in time for Halloween, is not just a big (one megawatt) solar array. Its 2,900 dual-axis trackers move to follow the sun, a trick providing a bigger treat for both energy recovery and material use reduction.

Solar panels require so much energy to manufacture and ship to your home or business, the first year of their existence might only make their installation a net-energy neutral endeavor. However, when the panels track the sun, output improves 30 percent. Based on the projected efficiency, installers of this 2,900 panel installation on the 368,000 square foot roof of Chiquita's cold storage industrial building in Oxnard used 23 percent fewer panels than would have been installed in a comparable fixed-tilt system, according to the press release.

The example of major corporations choosing better quality industrial products in order to use less resources is a lesson many of us can apply to our own purchases. When buying items for household or automotive use, you will often have the opportunity to choose items costing more per unit but saving money in the long run.

For example, durable items with longer warranties may cost more, but either last longer or can result in the remaining warranty time credited to a new purchase. The lesson even applies to clothing. "Fast fashion" items may be cheap, but styles change, and well-made garments (and especially shoes) in classic styles can endure.

For Halloween this year, you may not be popular if you give out a banana instead of candy. But if it is a banana from Chiquita's newly solar powered distribution center in Oxnard, at least you know it is green.