



An Overview of Solar Heating Tradeshows

Enerref Institute reports on US national solar heating trade fairs and how they are a hub for new information on the solar thermal industry, and provide opportunities professional networking



The US solar industry is blessed with four national tradeshows, each offering a different advantage for attendees and exhibitors.

Solar Power International is the principal US solar show, although InterSolar is far larger if you include its international venues. ASES, the American Solar Energy Society conference is America's homegrown original solar group, which began when thermal exhibitors far outnumbered PV. And the newcomer, SOLAR THERMAL '12, which originated as a regional forum in Milwaukee, has developed a national attendance.

The Milwaukee-based SOLAR THERMAL '12 is the only gathering dedicated exclusively to solar heating and cooling – which is a nice change since at other shows solar thermal sometimes can seem like an addendum to PV. And, of course, it's hard to beat the city of Milwaukee for a cold frosty beer after the tradeshow lights are turned off. Sure plenty of cities offer great brews, but like pizza in Brooklyn or New Orleans jambalaya, Milwaukee just feels like the right place to have a pint of beer.

But I digress.

ASES, usually held in April, joined with World Renewable Energy Forum this year to improve attendance. ASES was in Denver and even with World Renewable Energy, attendance was a little weak. But still, the show was a great success because Colorado has strong solar support, and NREL, the incredibly prolific resource of the Department of Energy, is in Golden Co.

Milwaukee's SOLAR THERMAL '12 takes place in early December.

Sure, you could argue Honolulu or Miami makes for a better venue in winter, but then there's that great Milwaukee beer to keep you warm. (Okay, alcohol doesn't really increase your body temperature, but that's for another article).

But I digress.

The show you need to know about right now is InterSolar in San Francisco because it takes place from July 9th through the 12th. And unlike years past, this year InterSolar will include a special Solar Heating and Cooling conference. The conference was the creation of Andreas Häberle who holds a PhD in, of course, Concentrating Collectors and Solar Thermal from the Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems in Freiburg, Germany – which itself, it should be mentioned, has no shortage of terrific beer gardens.

The conference will concentrate on solar heating and cooling science and policy with discussions about projects and results. Häberle wants to target the larger SHC community and bring the conference to the US every other year. At this late date, the full conference attendance fee is \$1,440.00, which includes 28 solar heating and cooling sessions and workshops during 5 days.

Only the immensely well-funded California Solar Initiative had the advertising dollars available to sponsor the conference, but if all goes well, that should change in years to come. As the CEO of an engineering firm, Häberle is well connected to the European solar thermal community. His hope is that his conference grows to become an exchange for the entire international solar heating and cooling scientific community. Visit www.shc2012.org.

Solar Power International (SPI) is primarily a PV show and easily the biggest of the four solar tradeshow. It's hosted by both Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) and by Solar Energy Power Association (SEPA). It's a September show, and this year it moves to Orlando. You can expect to bump up against as many as twenty thousand other attendees from 100 different countries covering the full spectrum of solar technologies. Experts abound. The full conference runs about \$1,200 if you wait until the last minute to sign up. SPI 2011 in Dallas was well attended and had roughly 1,200 exhibitors.

The ASES show just feels different than typical conventions – almost like a reunion. Many of the folks who exhibit and attend have been com'n round for a long time. The show is hosted by the American Solar Energy Society and for the first time this year was held with the biennial World Renewable Energy Congress (WREF). The full conference is about \$1,000 and they usually pull together some great workshops on thermal.

But no tradeshow shouts “solar thermal” louder than Milwaukee's own SOLAR THERMAL '12 as it's the only educational and networking event dedicated entirely to the solar thermal professional. In just four years SOLAR THERMAL has built a reputation for itself as a great setting to learn from and connect with experts in the SHC industry. Visit www.solarthermalconference.org.

Citywide, Milwaukee has aggressively adapted renewables, with unique programs dedicated specifically to solar heating and cooling. In a recent interview with Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, he explained, “Milwaukee is at the forefront of the solar heating and cooling

industry. As a Solar America City, Milwaukee is leading the way through strong manufacturing partnerships in the solar supply chain, quality installations, and innovative financing programs for our residents. We invite the solar industry to visit Milwaukee, and discover how we make solar work.”

Even if you know the technology well, each year the solar thermal industry and market changes. SOLAR THERMAL ‘12 is a great place to meet other professionals from throughout the country and to learn about other projects, design ideas, policy initiatives, best practices, equipment innovations, training and certifications.

Last year’s SOLAR THERMAL ‘11 seminar topics included; Hydronic Heat Emitters, Commercial System Design, Energy Metering, Solar Thermal Best Practices, DDC Programmable Controls and Btu Meter Integration, Integration of Solar Hydronic Design with Smart Technology, Solar Heating for Breweries, Seasonal Storage, System Monitoring , Large Commercial Heating Systems, Solar Cooling, Solar Air Heating, Financing options, and Policy Updates.

This year SOLAR THERMAL ‘12 will be held on December 6-7, 2012 at the Hilton Hotel in downtown Milwaukee, with pre-conference workshops and dealer trainings on December 5th. They plan to “tour local facilities that utilize solar heating or are part of the manufacturing supply chain.” And in Milwaukee, that could include a tour of a local brewery. But I digress.