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Solar Billboards in Oregon? Meadow Outdoor shows how.

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John Lehman

Meadow Outdoor recently completed a large 3KW solar lighting system, powering 8 lights on a 14' x 48' bulletin near Boardman, OR.

This is their second successful solar installation, Insider is talking to John Lehman, Operations Manager, at the job site.

John, typically we don't think of Oregon as being sunny enough for solar to be



economical, how did you make it work?

Our location near Boardman, Central OR gets more sun than Portland or the coast. It still requires a large solar array and powerful batteries to get through cloudy

winters. On our first system we installed a SmartLink so we could monitor it closely. It went through the winter with no issues or problems, so that gave us the confidence to proceed with the second, larger system.

Does the larger system effect the economics?

Probably so, but we still think it's a good investment. It does qualify for the 30 Federal tax Credit, which reduces the up front cost. With a 30 year design life, even with periodic battery replacements, it will pay for itself several times over.

What about the solar lights, are they bright enough?



Yes, we're very pleased with the lights, and more importantly, the customers are too. We used 24V DC Holophane LED lights, which are specifically designed for solar. Brian Kline, at **Reliable Electric**, was very helpful in selecting the lights and specifying the optics for both boards. For example, a smaller 10'6" x 36' sign used PanelVue optics, while the 14' x 48' used SignVue optics.

We've heard a few horror stories about solar systems not working reliably, how did you find and qualify your vendor?



Brian Kline at Reliable Electric recommended Autonomous Power, out of Houston, TX for the solar equipment. After getting a quote for the system, I asked for customer references, and spoke to several at length. They all had good things to say about the quality of hardware and reliability of the systems. Even though they were more expensive, we chose **Autonomous Power**. Based on the quality of the equipment, customer service and 5 year warranty, we feel we made a good decision.