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Hutto Ford dealership first in Texas to go solar

Freedom Solar projects first of their kind

HUTTO, TX— Two car dealerships in Hutto are seeing green, reducing their environmental footprint, and saving on energy costs thanks to recently completed rooftop solar arrays designed and installed by Texas-based Freedom Solar Power.

Covert Ford and Covert Chevrolet, both part of Central Texas' fifth generation family-owned Covert Auto Group, have new solar projects featuring a combined total of 120 kilowatts and 384 high-efficiency SunPower solar panels. Each dealership's 60-kilowatt array consists of 192 panels and is expected to offset 53 percent of each dealership's energy needs.

"This project is a major milestone, because Covert Ford of Hutto is now officially the first Ford dealership in Texas to go solar," says Bret Biggart, managing director of Freedom Solar. "It's also unique because you don't usually see Ford and Chevrolet dealerships right next to each other, yet alone under the same ownership."

The initial investment for the dealerships' solar project was \$193,000. Covert Ford Chevrolet of Hutto received a federal tax credit for 30 percent of the project's total cost, and a local utility rebate covered roughly 20 percent of total system costs. The entire project is expected to pay for itself in less than four years.

"It makes a lot of sense for auto dealerships, who own their buildings and want to lower operating expenses, to go solar," Biggart says.

"Electricity represents a large monthly expense for us and solar exponentially helps reduce that expense," says Dan Covert.

In a highly competitive market, auto dealers are positioned to benefit from solar in numerous ways, says Kyle Frazier, Freedom Solar's director of sales. The National Auto Dealers Association (NADA) notes that auto dealerships face close to \$2 billion in energy costs annually, their third highest operating expense.

"Today, more automotive dealers are turning to solar as a way to alleviate energy expenditures, which are a direct result of energy-intensive, air-conditioned showrooms and highly-lit lots accompanied by long operating hours. Dealerships are not only looking to reduce their operating costs and boost margins, but also to build a more sustainable future for their business," says Frazier.

Annually, the solar arrays will produce 185,338 kilowatt-hours of electricity, which will offset more than 132 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents. This is comparable to eliminating the greenhouse gas emissions from 27.8 passenger vehicles driven for one year, recycling 41.8 tons of waste instead of taking that amount to the landfill, or powering 19.4 homes' worth of electricity for one year.

Covert says: "Freedom Solar took care of everything. They answered our questions, walked us through the process, and handled all permitting paperwork associated with our installation, including the utility interconnection agreement and rebate incentive documents. It was a complete turnkey solution. In the end they under-promised and over-delivered, making us very satisfied customers."

Covert Ford and Covert Chevrolet of Hutto's project features SunPower 327-watt solar panels, which are the most efficient available today, with unmatched reliability and an expected useful life of more than 40 years. Freedom Solar Power is a SunPower Master Dealer, the only company with that distinction in Texas.

"Covert Ford Chevrolet of Hutto is a shining example of how any business can slash energy use and boost the bottom line through innovative thinking and careful planning," says Frazier. "With the Covert name synonymous with car sales in Central Texas, we're confident more area dealerships will begin to follow suit."

Freedom Solar Power is Texas' leading solar design and installation company. For more information, visit <http://www.freedomSolarPower.com/>.

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About Freedom Solar Power

Founded in 2007, Freedom Solar Power is the leader in turnkey solar installations in Texas, providing high quality, cost-effective, reliable solar solutions for residential and commercial markets. Recognized as the number one supplier of residential solar systems in Austin, number 338 on Inc. Magazine's top 500 fastest-growing private companies in America, and the third-fastest growing company in Central Texas by the Austin Business Journal, Freedom Solar Power has installed more than 15 megawatts of solar panels and has completed projects for corporate clients including Whole

Foods, Office Depot, Lake Flato Architects, Tejas Rodeo, The Thinkery, and the University of Texas. <http://www.freedomssolarpower.com/>

About Covert Ford Chevrolet of Hutto

Covert Ford Chevrolet of Hutto has an extensive inventory of new and pre-owned Ford and Chevrolet models. Covert Ford Chevrolet of Hutto has helped customers from Round Rock, Georgetown, Austin, Killeen, San Marcos, Waco, and other Texas cities find their perfect Ford or Chevrolet. Covert Ford Chevrolet prides itself on providing unsurpassed sales and service to make sure customers have best possible shopping experience. Whether you schedule an appointment or walk in, associates at Covert Ford Chevrolet have years of experience and expertise serving customers and boasts the best customer service, top of the line sales and service departments, lowest prices, and most convenient financing for your new or pre-owned vehicle purchase.

<http://www.coverthutto.com/>