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## Dublin Safeway has a bright idea

Grocery store installs more than 1,000 solar panels on its roof to save money, energy

By Blanca Torres

Safeway has installed more than 1,000 solar panels on the roof of its store in Dublin to help the environment and cut its energy costs.

Almost every inch of a grocery store is either air conditioned, refrigerated or frozen. Like many retailers, Pleasanton-based Safeway Inc. is taking steps to become more "green."

The Dublin location is the first of 23 stores in the state that will have solar-power-generating rooftops. The other 22 panel systems will be installed within a year, Safeway officials said.

"This store has a huge electrical load," said Joe Pettus, the company's senior vice president for fuel and energy. "Safeway is the largest commercial consumer of energy in California."

Safeway, the nation's third-largest grocer, has 568 stores in the state and more than 1,500 nationwide.

"This is an extension of Safeway as a brand that is more health conscious," said Tim Ross, a branding expert and principal with Kendall Ross, a Seattle-based retail consulting firm. "Creating stores that are more cost-effective and environmentally friendly goes along with that ideal. Safeway is carrying the message through every touch point that they can get."

The Dublin store will generate about 7,500 megawatt hours of electricity per year. That is enough to supply about 20 percent of the store's average power usage and as much as 48 percent during peak sunlight hours of 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Another perk is that the panels will decrease the store's carbon emissions by 244 tons per year. Last year, Safeway joined the Chicago Climate Exchange and pledged to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by 390,000 tons.

Kevin Hergoltz, a Safeway spokesman, declined to comment on how much Safeway expects to spend on the initiative, but he did say the program will produce a cost savings over time along with the environmental gains.

Safeway purchases 87,000 megawatt hours of wind energy every year that it uses to power all of its 295 gas stations as well as corporate offices in Pleasanton and Walnut Creek.

"Ten years ago, companies would have said, 'We won't do that. What's the benefit?'" Ross said. "Now, enough companies are on the green wagon and you can be proud of that."

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