Utilities Scaling Up with Fuel Cells

(Washington, DC—August 18, 2014) Fuel cells are helping U.S. utilities bolster an increasingly strained and antiquated electrical grid to protect residents from power outages while generating cleaner and more reliable electricity. Several multi-megawatt (MW) installations are already operating at utilities in Connecticut, Delaware and California, and more are coming soon.

Some energy companies see the long-term potential in adding fuel cells to their portfolios today.

- In July 2014, Exelon Corporation, a leading competitive energy provider, announced it is providing equity financing for 21 MW of Bloom Energy fuel cell projects at 75 commercial facilities for two customers in California, Connecticut, New Jersey and New York. One of the customers is AT&T, a company that already has fuel cells installed at telecommunications sites, offices and other facilities around the country.

- Also in July, NRG Energy, dual-based in New Jersey and Texas, serving almost 3 million residential and commercial customers throughout the country, invested $35 million in Connecticut fuel cell manufacturer FuelCell Energy. NRG established a new $40 million revolving construction and term loan facility to accelerate project development by FuelCell Energy and its subsidiaries. NRG Energy will also market FuelCell Energy’s fuel cell power plants to its customers.

Adding fuel cell power generation also helps energy companies meet clean energy requirements imposed by Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) – a regulation in place in states around the country requiring energy companies to acquire a certain percentage of their electricity from renewable sources.

- In Delaware, Delmarva Power operates 30 MW of natural gas-powered Bloom Energy Servers at two of its substations, enough to power about 22,000 homes. This is the largest utility-scale deployment of fuel cell technology in the U.S.

- WGL Holdings, Inc., through its subsidiary, Washington Gas Energy Systems announced a 2.6-MW fuel cell project in Santa Clara County, California (SCC). WGESystems will finance, build, own and operate the 2.6-MW Bloom Energy project and sell all energy generated to SCC under a 20-year power purchase agreement (PPA). Washington Gas has had a 200-kW fuel cell powering its
office and operations center in Springfield, Virginia, since December 2011.

- In Connecticut, Dominion has deployed a 14.9-MW fuel cell power-generating facility in Bridgeport that generates enough electricity to power approximately 15,000 homes. Dominion will sell the output of the fuel cell power station to Connecticut Light & Power (CL&P) under a 15-year fixed power purchase agreement. The project is located on a remediated brownfield site in an industrial area and the city is now receiving tax revenue from the former vacant lot.

- United Illuminating (UI), also in Connecticut, announced that it will install 2.8 MWs of fuel cell power plants at two of its sites – Bridgeport and New Haven. The Bridgeport location will be located at a former landfill site that will also include a 2.2 MW of solar power to create a renewable energy park. The New Haven will be located in the port area of the city near an electrical substation owned by UI and will provide continuous power to the substation.

The fuel cell installations at both of the Connecticut sites have a much smaller footprint than other alternatives. The Dominion 14.9-MW fuel cell system takes up about 1 ½ acres of land and the UI Bridgeport 2.8 MW installation is using ¼ of an acre (the solar array is using more than 8 acres).

For more information about any of these news items, or about fuel cells in general, including recent developments and industry news, please contact Fuel Cells 2000. We are happy to provide industry contacts, images or quotes for stories.