

Installation of solar PV project at Netcare hospital completed

The installation of a 75kW rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) facility at the Netcare Rehabilitation Hospital in Auckland Park, Johannesburg has been completed.



Solar installation Netcare Rehabilitation Hospital

The project, which represents a R1.2m investment by Netcare, forms part of a vast energy savings and sustainability programme that is being undertaken at the Netcare group's hospitals and other facilities over a five year period.

Jacques du Plessis, MD of the Netcare hospital division, says that the installation represents an important milestone, as it is the first installation of a phased-in solar PV project initially being undertaken across six Netcare hospitals in Gauteng. The other five hospitals are Netcare Mulbarton, Netcare N17, Netcare Garden City, Netcare Park Lane and Netcare Milpark hospitals. Over the next 18 months all old inefficient lighting at the five hospitals will also be replaced.

First phase

"This first phase of the solar energy project in Gauteng, which represents a R30m investment, is due for completion by April 2016, while a further two phases are already in the planning stages," says Du Plessis. There is roof space available across Netcare's extensive hospital portfolio of 56 facilities, to implement as much as 7.2 megawatts of solar PV capacity, which will assist the group to achieve significant savings and reductions in CO2 emissions.

The 75kW PV installation at Netcare Rehabilitation Hospital will provide an average of 119,000kWh of electricity a year, enabling free electricity to be provided to meet approximately 5.5% of the hospital's total annual power needs.

"While this may not sound significant, it will represent meaningful power savings over time, particularly when it is combined with a number of the other energy saving initiatives being implemented at this and other Netcare hospitals around South Africa," adds Du Plessis.

"The initiative forms part of a broader national project, which aims to save more than ten million kWh of electricity, ten million tons of CO2 emissions and, indirectly, more than 13,5 million litres of water per annum. It represents the largest project of its kind to be undertaken by a private hospital provider in South Africa."

Primary focus

Du Plessis explains that a primary focus of Netcare's sustainability programme is focused on electricity, which accounts for 88% of the group's carbon footprint and cost the company R235m in 2013. "Our sustainability programme aims to reduce energy consumption by 30% over a five-year period and effectively save R1bn in costs over the next ten years."

Du Plessis says that Netcare's sustainability programme was launched in August 2013 in response to rising energy costs, as well as management's commitment to responsible corporate citizenship. "No company today can afford to ignore its impact on the environment and on the communities they serve," he adds.

Netcare is collaborating with industry experts, engineering consultants and site technical teams to identify opportunities to minimise the group's impact on the environment. Technologies considered have ranged from low-flow showerheads to a multi-million rand tri-generation plant.

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