



The world's largest solar power plant, made up of thousands of mirrors focusing the sun's energy, has officially started operations in Nevada's Mojave Desert.

The \$2.2 billion, 400-megawatt , which covers 5 square miles near the Nevada-California border and has three 40-story towers where the light is focused, is a joint project by NRG Energy, Google and BrightSource Energy. The project received a \$1.6 billion federal loan guarantee.

The plant, which went online Thursday, is to power 140,000 homes. It was dedicated by U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz.

Siliconbeat blog says:

"Unlike the photovoltaic solar panels that are common on the roofs of homes and commercial buildings, solar thermal technology concentrates the sun's rays to boil water and generate steam. Solar thermal, also known as concentrating solar power, or CSP, is land-intensive, requires access to transmission lines and typically faces several environmental reviews and permitting hurdles before projects can be built in the desert."

According to , "[larger] projects are on the way, but for now, Ivanpah is being described as a marker for the United States' emerging solar industry."

, however, is skeptical of the enterprise, saying Ivanpah is "the first of its kind, and may be among the last, in part because of growing evidence that the technology it uses is killing birds."

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