

## ENERGY

## Dade homes will be first to go green

*Business executives and the mayor of Miami announced an energy initiative with 'smart meters' to save money by lowering power usage.*

**BY JOHN DORSCHNER**

Miami Mayor Manny Diaz and the chief executives of four major national companies announced a sweeping move Monday to make Miami-Dade County the national leader in the green movement.

Within two years, every home in the county will have a "smart meter" to allow customers to monitor their energy usage and help them figure out ways to cut their electric bills.

Combined with putting solar panels at major county educational institutions, 300 new plug-in utility vehicles and other measures, the initiative announced Monday at a conference in downtown Miami will be the "largest, most integrated project of its kind" in the nation, said Jeffrey Immelt, chief executive of General Electric.

The project will cost Florida Power & Light about \$200 million. About half of that could qualify for funding from the federal stimulus package, said Bryan Olnick, FPL's manager of the Energy Smart Miami initiative. Most of what the feds don't pay for will ultimately be picked up by FPL's customers.

The initiative will create an estimated 700 to 1,000 jobs over the next two years. "Just installing the meters will require a lot of workers," Olnick said. The effort is so huge that for two years, a semi-trailer truck will need to arrive daily filled with meters.

The project was announced at Miami Dade College by Diaz and CEOs of four national companies — FPL Group's Lewis Hay III, Cisco's John Chambers, Silver Spring Network's Scott Lang and GE's Immelt.

"What we're doing in Miami is the future," Chambers said.

The companies all have parts of the initiative — and the executives expressed eagerness to take advantage of the Obama administration's decision to make billions of dollars available for green projects as part of the stimulus package.

The initiative gained national attention even before the midday conference, when Hay and Immelt talked about it on the Today show, two days in advance of Earth Day.

### 'AT THE FRONT LINE'

Miami was chosen, the executives said, because of Mayor Diaz, who has been pushing the green movement, both within the city and as president of the United States Conference of Mayors.

"Miami is at the front line of global climate change," Diaz said at the Miami conference, because much of the city could be under two feet of water by the end of the century if warming trends continue.

"It was really the mayor's vision that helped bring all of us here today," Hay told a standing-room only crowd of more than 200.

Some other cities — such as Austin, Texas, and Boulder, Colo. — have started similar green initiatives, but the Miami-Dade effort is on a much grander scale, Immelt said. "This is not a test — not a hobby — this is a big business application."

### SEEING IT ALL

Smart meters allow consumers to see what's happening with their usage — and costs. They can set the air conditioning at 78 degrees when they leave home for a few hours. A wireless chip inside the meter sends the information to the Internet, where the customer can see his costs on

a daily, or even hourly basis.

The next day, the homeowner could set the temperature to 81 degrees when she leaves the house and see how that cost compares with the 78 degrees. The same can be done with a water heater and pool pump timers.

Such smart meters have been part of a pilot project of 100,000 homes in Broward County, with neighborhoods being phased in from 2007 through last September. Olnick said it was too soon to see if the meters led to reduced usage, but the anecdotal evidence so far has been positive.

For the companies involved, the Miami project could have global implications. GE makes the smart meters. Cisco creates smart networks and some smart devices. Silver Spring Networks makes the wireless chip inside the smart meters.

Florida Power & Light has been working hard to emphasize its commitment to green, even as it proposes expanding its nuclear capacity. Its parent, FPL Group, has long been the nation's leader in wind and solar power. "We believe in doing the right thing for our customers," Hay said.