
Hirschfeld Steel, Martifer announce partnership in wind tower plant

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[embed](#)>The wind isn't Martifer Energy Systems' only partner in its \$40 million manufacturing investment in San Angelo.

The company announced Friday that Hirschfeld Industries, a long established San Angelo structural steel company, has become a full 50 percent joint venture partner in the wind turbine tower fabrication plant.

The joint venture partners also announced that construction will begin Monday on the plant, located on Old Ballinger Highway.

"On Monday, June 22, concrete, steel, heavy machinery and a lot of people are coming here," said Pedro Dinis, executive director for Martifer and the company's chief representative in San Angelo.

The start of construction will be the culmination of two years of searching by the Portuguese company for a suitable location in North America. "It's been a long journey to this piece of land," Dinis said at Friday's announcement, which took place on the vacant acreage where the plant will be built. "And I've been with it every step of the way. "Today, San Angelo is my city."

Speaking to a crowd of several dozen people under cloudy skies and dogged, appropriately, by a stiff wind, Dennis Hirschfeld, the CEO of Hirschfeld Industries, said the joint venture will present new opportunities in steel fabrication for the company's employees. Hirschfeld, noting that he is not given to overstatement, said the joint venture is a "transformational event" that will put Hirschfeld in the "front line of renewable energy" in West Texas.

Well before Martifer arrived, Hirschfeld said, his company had considered going into the wind business but decided the time wasn't right.

They initially saw Martifer as a competitor, he said, then thought about a partnership.

"We extended a hand to them, and they said yes, they would be interested," Hirschfeld said.

Talks led to action after Hirschfeld representatives toured a Martifer plant in Portugal. "It was a state-of-the-art facility," Hirschfeld said. "We were sold after we walked through that factory."

Richard Phillips, president of Hirschfeld, said the partnership was formed by Hirschfeld buying a 50 percent interest in the limited liability corporation that Martifer created to run its San Angelo plant. The joint venture company, which is now called Martifer-Hirschfeld Energy Systems LLC, will have its own six-member board of directors and management, Phillips said.

Dennis Hirschfeld will be the chairman of the board, and two representatives of Insight Equity of Dallas, which owns part of Hirschfeld, will also sit on the board: Ted Beneski, the company chairman, and Victor Vescovo, the chief

operating officer. Martifer, Phillips said, will be represented by Dinis, Martifer Group co-founder and vice-CEO Jorge Martins and Antonio Pontes, CEO of energy systems.

The companies will each contribute their own expertise, Phillips said. Martifer people will oversee construction of the plant, he said, and they expect to hire a construction overseer. Hirschfeld will handle the human resources and financial side of the project.

“It’s a true 50-50 partnership,” Phillips said. “This is a model Martifer has used around the world. They like to partner with local people.”

The new business structure will not affect the planned parameters of the plant, Phillips said, which will still be a \$40 million facility built to fabricate 100 wind towers a year, employing about 125 people.

For now, at least — both Phillips and Dinis said Friday the joint venture’s goal is to eventually double the output.

And the agreement is not limited to San Angelo, or even to North America, Phillips said.

“In the long run, our plan is to double the capacity of this plant and possibly add other plants,” Phillips said.

VIDEO -[Ground Broken for Wind Turbine Factory](#)