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## Martifer joint venture goes to work

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San Angelo, Texas — The Martifer-Hirschfeld Energy Systems joint venture began work in earnest Monday on the \$30 million Phase I of its wind tower manufacturing plant.

San Angelo's Reece Albert started tearing away soil for the plant's foundation at the 32-acre site on Old Ballinger Highway. The 170,000-square foot facility is expected to be producing the metal towers by the second quarter of next year.

Monday was the start of something San Angelo hasn't seen for years: a new major manufacturing venture.

Martifer Energy Systems announced the project last year after being offered a cluster of incentives by the city of San Angelo, but it was only on Friday that the joint venture was announced.

Both companies feel the enterprise is stronger as a partnership.

Dennis Hirschfeld, CEO of Hirschfeld Industries and the board chairman of the joint venture, said Monday his firm and the European company have a lot of shared corporate culture.

"They are much more West Texas in how they do business than other European countries," said Hirschfeld.

Martifer, he said, has a reputation for conducting business with a handshake and by standing by its word.

In common with Hirschfeld, he said, they also are master metal workers. "Their skill in fabrication is close to what ours is, they are very similar to us. They are our equal in the European area," he said.

The business arrangement is not a new one for Martifer, which has gone into joint ventures in the past with European companies in locations where the company has a manufacturing plant. Pedro Dinis, executive director of Martifer Energy Systems and CEO of the joint venture, said a partnership was not the company's initial idea but Martifer thought it would be beneficial after deciding to locate to San Angelo.

"We anticipate this venture will provide both companies with a faster way to achieve production and capacity to face the market in a stronger shape," he said. "It is a great opportunity to be with somebody local."

It was the icing on the cake for Kathy Keane, who retired as director of the San Angelo Development Corporation on Friday and stood by as months of work came to fruition at the groundbreaking of the Martifer plant. Keane played a major role in enticing Martifer to San Angelo, and she said the two companies are a powerhouse together. She said that in the long run the partnership will help advance the renewable energy market and create vast opportunities for San Angelo.

"The stars aligned on this one. The right place and the right time," she said. "(Hirschfeld) took the opportunity not only for the company, but for San Angelo as well."