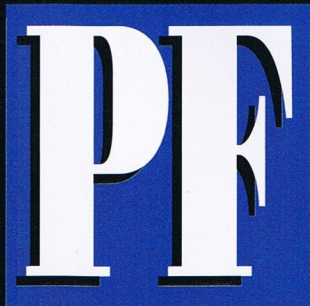


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WASTING ENERGY?

Conservation steps you can take today

A conversation with...

Michael Feldstein

President, Surface Technology Inc.

Early in 2007, Michael Feldstein filed papers with the state of New Jersey to install state-of-the-art solar electric generating panels across both the roof of his Trenton-based metal finishing plant and of his own home. With rooftops free of shade, a hefty load of paperwork, and a \$640,000 initial investment, Surface Technology is now ready reap the benefits of solar power. Once the panels are installed, the company will be reducing the amount of CO₂ it releases into the atmosphere by 160,000 lb/yr.

Feldstein spoke of his experience at PRODUCTS FINISHING's Electroless Nickel Conference in Orlando last fall. Attendees were shocked by how affordable the system becomes with tax credits and government rebates (only about \$58,000, to be fully paid back in less than five years). Feldstein is the only plater we are aware of that's making this eco-friendly (and extremely cool) move toward electric independence.



Michael Feldstein's plating company is a leader in the green movement.

Right now, you're waiting to have the solar panels installed in your facility, right?

MF: Yes, and I'm anxious to get it done! But in some ways it hasn't been so bad that they haven't gotten to us yet, because it's not something that's being commonly done. It's been up and running for about nine months now in my home, and I'd like it to go a full year so I can see any glitches that come up before the business has it fully installed. When we moved into our facility 20 years ago we were really the guinea pigs for a lot of environmental technologies that barely existed at the time, like rubber linings under the entire building.

Rubber linings?

MF: Yeah. We were the first people we ever knew of to do it. You have the concrete slab of the building built to a slight tilt so that if something spills, the liquid will flow to one end or another. Liquids flow to trenches that have pumps that will pump them to a containment tank, and there's a chemical-resistant rubber liner that's under the concrete so that nothing can escape our building without us wanting it to.

So you're protecting the community, as well. What other environmental measures are you taking?

MF: We are changing the lighting in our entire facility. Just last week I got a statistic that for \$12,000 of light fixture changes, we will save about \$4,000 a year. The environmental impact is five cars, 21 tons of greenhouse gases and 49 barrels of oil. We're talking about roughly 100 fixtures. And then, this is really interesting, we're changing out our exit signs. Each exit sign costs \$50 a year to keep lit. We're replacing those with LEDs and now it will be something along the lines of \$2 a year to keep lit. They use almost no electricity.

These are big changes. What was your initial inspiration?

MF: It's really just about being environmentally conscious, cutting down on imported oil from countries that we'd rather not be buying products from.

How have your employees or customers reacted?

MF: Our people here are really proud of it, and so are our customers. Our European customers are blown away because, as far as I can tell, we're going to be the only solar-powered plating operation. They think of us in America as really far behind on environmental protection, so when they hear that we are doing something for the environment, it really makes an impression.

What advice do you have for other companies that want to make these kinds of changes?

MF: Look into it, do the research and talk to lots of different companies. If you're going to do something that pioneering, look at a lot of options. We called three companies for full assessment and proposals. We went with the one we were most comfortable with, but we got insight from all three. Be patient and think things through. To the extent that there are complications, it's worth it. It's a marathon, not a sprint, for technology like this.

