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GridPoint to Manage Wind Power Battery Storage

The smart grid technology startup has inked a deal with Xcel Energy to manage storing wind power in batteries when demand is low and drawing on it when it's needed most.

Smart grid startup [GridPoint Inc.](#) got into the utility power storage business Tuesday, announcing that utility Xcel Energy had chosen its software to manage a wind power battery storage project.

Arlington, Va.-based GridPoint will control the flow of power between an 11-megawatt wind farm in Luverne, Minn. and NGK Insulators' 1-megawatt, sodium-sulfur battery that is capable of holding 7.2 megawatt-hours of energy, the companies announced. The battery storage project is expected to be complete in January 2009.

While GridPoint has managed some small-scale storage for distributed energy generated at homes or businesses, Tuesday's announcement was a first for GridPoint in the management of utility-scale power storage, Corsell said.

But with the need to store intermittent power from wind turbines and other renewable energy sources expected to grow rapidly, it likely won't be the last, he added.

"I believe the utility-scale energy storage model has huge potential, especially in connection with wind farm development," Corsell told Greentech Media at the Greentech Innovations: End-to-End Electricity conference in New York.

That's because wind turbines only generate power when the wind blows, meaning they need backup, or "firming" power that's today usually provided by peaking natural gas-fired power plants, he said.

"Energy storage has the potential to eliminate the need for that firming resource," Corsell said. He wouldn't disclose how much GridPoint would be paid for the deal.

Beyond reducing the need for firming power, batteries can allow wind power to be stored when prices for power are cheap and sold at peak-price times in the afternoons - a key part of what GridPoint's software will allow Xcel to do, Corsell said.

GridPoint's software platform will also be tracking the battery system's performance for the University of Minnesota, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and the Great Plains Institute.

The power will come from a wind farm owned by Minwind Energy LLC. S&C Electric Company will install the battery and components from Japan's NKG.

Sodium-sulfur batteries, which store power efficiently but require very high temperatures to operate, are among a number of energy storage solutions being offered by startups and established companies alike. Other technologies include flow batteries, solid oxide fuel cells, thermal mass technologies, compressed air and others (see [Batteries for the Grid, Q&A: MegaWatt Storage Targets Utilities and Startup ES&P to Store Electricity in the Air](#)).