

Wind Turbines Take to the Road

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PHOTO BY JIM KNOWLES

A logging truck needed a special state permit to carry the wind turbine tower from Halus Power Systems down Grant Avenue in San Lorenzo to the freeway on its way to a research center at Texas Tech.

By Jim Knowles

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It looked like an intercontinental ballistic missile traveling down Grant Avenue in San Lorenzo one day this month, but don't worry.

That was really a tower for a wind turbine leaving Halus Power on Grant and heading for Texas Tech University.

The truck had a special state permit to go straight down Grant through a residential area to the freeway. Because the tower is so long, some turns would be out of the question.

Halus Power Systems in San Leandro rebuilds wind turbines. They shipped three customized turbines to the university. Texas Tech, along with the Department of Energy and Sandia Labs, will use these turbines for research near the university's campus in Lubbock, Texas.

"These are highly customized turbines," said said Halus General Manager Louis Rigaud.

People from Sandia and Vestas spent the past month at Halus Power getting the turbines ready, fitting them out with new hardware and software to make them some of the most advanced turbines in the world, Rigaud said.

Halus rebuilds turbines made by Vestas Wind Systems.

Usually, the towers are delivered in sections. Since the towers are tapered, the sections fit into each other to make a more compact load to transport by truck. The turbine blades also fit inside the towers for transportation.

But the Texas Tech project wanted to reduce the assembly time on the site, so they requested the towers to be delivered in one piece, Rigaud said.

A truck that could carry such a long tower turns out to be a logging truck, and truck driver Mitch Green of Leavitt's Freight Service of Springfield, Oregon spent the morning securing the load on his truck for the trip to Texas.

Local companies worked on the project, including Testing Engineers Inc. of San Leandro and Glazier Ironworks of Hayward, and Dahl-Beck Electric of Richmond worked on rebuilding the motors.

“They say there are no green jobs, but there are plenty of green jobs,” Rigaud said. “We use them every day.”