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High-Tech Approach To Energy Conservation

By David Louie

June 22 - KGO - With our air conditioning running full blast, energy conservation is on everyone's mind. Managers of the state's power grid are asking that we keep our afternoon electricity use to a minimum. High-tech equipment is a prodigious user of energy, but now an innovative program is underway in the Bay Area to help alleviate that problem.

The key word is innovation. The Bay Area and certainly Silicon Valley is a center of innovation. That innovation led to the birth of high-tech. Today, the Bay Area is home to one-fifth of all the country's servers, and those servers use a lot of power.

This row of servers could revolutionize high-tech. It's a research project with a goal of reducing energy consumption.

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There are nine million servers operating in the U.S. They run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They're the backbone of the Internet. They store our financial records and maintain business data. But it takes billions of dollars to power them.

The California Energy Commission has funded a \$4 million project to test new ways to reduce energy use. Over 20 companies, including Sun Microsystems, are

donating equipment to demonstrate that servers can operate on D.C. power more efficiently than A.C. Early research indicates the savings could be in the millions a year for a large server farm.

There is also another benefit. The five-step power conversion process used today generates heat. So much heat that air conditioning must be used.

Bill Tschudi, Lawrence Berkeley Lab: "It's good public relations, but it also is solving a problem the industry is seeing which is removal of the heat in these data centers, and it's getting to the point where any amount of heat you can eliminate would be a big benefit."

A large data center or server farm uses 100 times more energy per square foot than a typical office building.

Clark Gellings at the Electric Power Research Institute believes this research will lead to consumers using D.C. at home.

Clark Gellings, Vice President of Innovation: "Our homes today, if you think about them, use an enormous amount of D.C. power internally within our high-density televisions, within our personal computers, within compact fluorescent lamps, within increasing numbers of other appliances. If we really apply innovation to these end-use devices, we could considerably change how that energy is used in the home."

Researchers at the Lawrence Berkeley Lab are so encouraged by the research, they're getting ready to show it off beginning next month to energy companies, server producers and even energy officials. The Bay Area again leading in innovation.

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ABC7 Index	970.66	-7.90	-0.81%

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