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NREL Recognizes Solar Energy Researcher with National Honor

Georgia Tech's Rohatgi Wins Second Annual Rappaport Award

Atlanta (December 16, 2003)—The U.S. Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) has presented the 2003 Paul Rappaport Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Award to Ajeet Rohatgi, founding director of the University Center of Excellence for Photovoltaics Research and Education at Georgia Tech.

"Dr. Rohatgi has for more than a quarter century focused his immense technical talents on developing low cost and high efficiency solar cells," said NREL Director Richard Trully. "So many of the significant advances that have been achieved in this important field can be credited to his tireless efforts."

Dr. Rohatgi additionally has played a significant role in education, having supervised 25 Ph.D. students in photovoltaic sciences, and currently serving as Regents Professor and Georgia Power Distinguished Professor in the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology. He has published more than 275 papers in his field and holds 10 U.S. patents.

NREL initiated the Paul Rappaport Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Award last year in celebration of the laboratory's 25th anniversary. It is named for the laboratory's pioneering first director and honors outstanding efforts to advance renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. Waverly Power and Light, an Iowa utility that has made great strides in wind power development, was the first recipient of the national award.

This year's Rappaport Award was presented to Dr. Rohatgi by NREL Director Trully at an NREL event Tuesday in Denver. Also honored was Dr. Morton Price of the Bell Labs, a pioneer in the development of early solar cells.

"I am truly honored to receive this award since this recognition comes from my peers and colleagues and it is named after a true champion of renewable energy and a pioneer in the field of photovoltaics—Paul Rappaport," Dr. Rohatgi said. "Personally, I am very thankful to NREL and DOE for their continuous financial and technical support throughout my career. Additionally, this award is a tribute to my Georgia Tech faculty and staff colleagues, my past and present students, the Georgia Tech administration, and my industrial and governmental collaborators. They have played a major role in the research leading to this award, and I am very grateful to them."



Over the years, Dr. Rohatgi has helped the Georgia Institute of Technology develop one of the most respected cell characterization and fabrication labs in the world.

Dr. Rohatgi began his research into photovoltaic devices in 1977 as an engineer at the Westinghouse Research and Development Center in Pittsburgh, Pa., and received the Westinghouse Engineering Achievement Award in 1984 for his work on high efficiency silicon solar cells. A year later, Dr. Rohatgi joined Georgia Institute of Technology as an associate professor of electrical engineering.

In 1985, Dr. Rohatgi produced a cell with record efficiency on thin silicon ribbon. Eleven years later, he achieved record efficiency with cast multicrystalline silicon. That work led to more widespread research into the material, and today multicrystalline silicon accounts for 48 percent of all newly manufactured PV cells. Recently, he has produced record high-efficiency cells of 18.2 percent on silicon ribbon using photolithography, as well as 16% using screen-printed contacts.

Over the years, Dr. Rohatgi has helped the Georgia Institute of Technology develop one of the most respected cell characterization and fabrication labs in the world. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) in 1992 made Georgia Institute of Technology the first University Center of Excellence in Photovoltaics Research and Education in the United States. Dr. Rohatgi currently serves as the center's director. Rohatgi is also the recipient of the 1996 Georgia Tech Distinguished Professor Award and the 2003 William R. Cherry Award, which was presented at the Third World Conference on Photovoltaics held last May.

One lasting contribution came as part of the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. Dr. Rohatgi and his group designed and installed the world's largest grid-connected, roof-top PV system at the Georgia Tech Aquatic Center.

The Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers made Dr. Rohatgi an IEEE Fellow in 1991 for his contributions to photovoltaics.

NREL is a U.S. Department of Energy's premier laboratory for renewable energy research and development and a leading laboratory for energy efficiency research and development. NREL is operated for DOE by Midwest Research Institute and Battelle.