

VEGASINC

Pahrump electric utility to open Las Vegas office

By Eli Segall

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A Pahrump electric utility is opening a satellite office in Las Vegas.

Valley Electric Association, which serves about 45,000 people, has signed a lease for 6,500 square feet in Red Rock Business Center between Russell and Sunset roads just east of the 215 Beltway, in the southwest valley.

It's expected to open early next year, giving VEA its first office in the Las Vegas Valley in more than 30 years.

The outpost, which won't be staffed full time, will give VEA officials a place to meet with lawmakers, regulators and renewable-energy developers and vendors, said Chris Brooks, executive vice president of energy services.



The office is about a mile south of the state Public Utilities Commission's Southern Nevada headquarters. That proximity was a factor in choosing the Red Rock office complex, Brooks said.

VEA, a nonprofit cooperative founded in 1965, used to have its headquarters in Las Vegas. But the utility moved to Pahrump, about 50 miles west of Las Vegas in Nye County, in 1981, according to Brooks.

Its service territory primarily runs along the Nevada-California border, with most customers in the Silver State. VEA mostly serves households, though it had a growth spurt in 2012 when it landed a five-year, \$61.6 million contract to provide power to the Nevada National Security Site and a 50-year contract to purchase, maintain and operate electric distribution facilities at Creech Air Force Base.

When the Creech deal was awarded, VEA said it was valued at \$23.6 million, but it now says the contract is worth \$36.6 million.

NV Energy, Nevada's main power company, took issue with both deals.

In filings with state regulators, the Las Vegas company claimed the U.S. Department of Energy owed it an exit fee for switching power providers at the Security Site, and that VEA was encroaching on its territory at Creech.

The Public Utilities Commission last year dismissed NV Energy's Creech complaint and denied the Security Site petition.

Besides opening a satellite office, VEA also is expanding its Pahrump headquarters.

The company broke ground this year on a 33,120-square-foot innovation, engineering and operations center. The building is expected to be completed in mid-2015. Management plans to consolidate some operations into the new building and turn an older, existing one into a conference center, Brooks said.