State clarifies solar photovoltaic and energy storage installers as essential energy workers during COVID-19 response

The California Energy Commission (CEC) today clarified that statewide orders in response to COVID-19 identifying essential electricity industry workers includes solar photovoltaic and energy storage installers.

The ongoing health and safety of all Californians is of upmost importance to the State of California and the (CEC). Consistent with Governor Gavin Newsom’s Executive Order to combat the COVID-19 Pandemic (N-33-20, dated March 19, 2020), the CEC advises all of its partners and stakeholders to abide by its directives.

Under this order, the California Department of Public Health’s (CDPH) State Public Health Officer has ordered, “all individuals living in the State of California to stay home or at their place of residence except as needed to maintain continuity of operations of the federal critical infrastructure sectors, as outlined here. In addition, and in consultation with the Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, I may designate
additional sectors as critical in order to protect the health and well-being of all Californians.”

The State Public Health Officer has designated essential critical infrastructure workers needed at this time to support critical sectors, including the construction and energy sectors, as detailed here. This list of essential workers is updated as needed.

The list of identified essential workers for the electricity industry includes “workers who maintain, ensure, or restore the generation, transmission, and distribution of electric power…” This list includes workers whose efforts are needed to supply electricity to households and businesses, and essential workers such as electricians who provide services that are necessary to maintaining the essential operation of construction sites and construction projects (including those that support such projects to ensure the ongoing availability of electricity).

Installation and maintenance of photovoltaics (PV) and energy storage projects have the added importance of supporting the resilience and continued operations of critical equipment and infrastructure across the state that requires uninterrupted power. This may include medical equipment and other devices necessary to ensure ongoing health and safety in consideration of potential grid outages and/or public safety power shutoffs that may occur in the future.

All essential workers are instructed to follow the public health guidelines issued by CDPH and local public health officials, including social distancing and staying home when sick to protect those they serve, their coworkers, and themselves.

As efforts to control the spread of the virus continue, state and local officials are regularly updating their directives and guidance. Consistent with their authority, some local jurisdictions have placed additional restrictions beyond those put in place by Governor Newsom and CDPH.

To ensure essential services are provided, the CEC supports local enforcement agencies continuing to permit building construction and energy projects, including PV and battery storage installations for both newly constructed and existing buildings. Please contact your local enforcement agency to verify which permitting services are available in your area.

For more information and assistance, the CEC’s Energy Standards Hotline is responding to emails daily, Monday through Friday. Please leave a voice message to receive a telephone response. Your understanding, cooperation, and patience in these challenging times is appreciated.

For more information on the state’s response to COVID-19, visit https://covid19.ca.gov.

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