

**From:** [David Twa](#)  
**To:** [Julie Enea](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Clean energy businesses as "essential"  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 22, 2020 6:45:50 PM  
**Attachments:** [Bay Area Memo - Final.pdf](#)

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FYI

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**From:** David Twa  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 22, 2020 6:45 PM  
**To:** Candace Andersen <Candace.Andersen@bos.cccounty.us>; Karen Mitchoff <karen.mitchoff@bos.cccounty.us>  
**Subject:** FW: Clean energy businesses as "essential"

FYI -in case you didn't see this

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**From:** Tim McRae <[tmcrae@svlg.org](mailto:tmcrae@svlg.org)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 22, 2020 4:54:57 PM  
**Subject:** Clean energy businesses as "essential"

Dear Bay Area Supervisors and County Public Health Officers:

Please find attached a letter from eleven organizations asking you to include solar, storage, and electric vehicle installation as "essential" businesses at this time. Each technology can be installed and operated safely, and each has resiliency benefits. While we are in the midst of a pandemic, we need to keep in mind that wildfire season lurks just around the corner, and each of these solutions will be needed soon, which necessitates preparing for them now.

Do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions about this request.

Stay safe and healthy,

Tim

--

**Tim McRae**

Vice President, Energy

408.501.7871 | [svlg.org](http://svlg.org)

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*Silicon Valley: Better Together*





April 22, 2020

Dear Bay Area Supervisors and County Public Health Officers:

Thank you for all that you are doing to keep the public safe and prevent further spread of COVID-19. We appreciate and support the tough decisions you must make to prioritize the health of your residents during these trying and unprecedented times. The industries represented in this letter have made similarly tough decisions - balancing the safety of employees and customers with providing the essential services they need. As the County continues to take necessary and urgent measures to safeguard public health and safety, we ask that you not lose sight of the need to provide residents and businesses with access to reliable and affordable energy.

Clean distributed energy and electric vehicle ("EV") charging installations are essential parts of California's energy infrastructure, and can be performed safely while adhering to social distancing and other protocols designed to protect against further spread of the disease. To ensure the immediate installation of this essential infrastructure can continue, we request confirmation that solar, storage and EV installation companies are deemed essential businesses under the current Shelter-in-Place Order, and that clear guidance be included in any future orders/guidance that this work is essential.

### **Solar, Storage and EV Charging Are Critical Infrastructure**

Distributed residential and commercial solar, storage and EV infrastructure installations are integral parts of California's essential energy infrastructure, just like utilities and power plants. State energy regulators plan on continuance of all forms of essential energy infrastructure to serve Californians. Importantly, distributed solar provides needed energy infrastructure benefits to energy system reliability by providing locally-sourced energy, reducing system-wide energy loads, providing ancillary services such as reactive power and voltage support, and improving power quality. Solar + storage installations and EV charging infrastructure provide clean backup generation needed during power outages. And all of this work supports a primary goal of the County's order by encouraging residents to stay home.

The essential nature of these installations is recognized in the most recent U.S. Department of Homeland Security Cyber + Infrastructure (CISA) Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce which includes "workers supporting the energy sector, regardless of the energy source

(including but not limited to...renewable), segment of the system, or infrastructure the worker is involved in..."<sup>1</sup> The Governor's office similarly recognized these installations as essential in an April 7th email from Rhys Williams, Senior Advisor on Emergency Preparedness and Management, which affirmed that workers defined in the most recent CISA Guidance are deemed essential under the State Shelter-in-Place Order.

### **Safe Operations**

The industry's top priority is the safety and well-being of its employees, customers and communities. Solar, storage, and EV charging infrastructure work can be done safely and securely, eliminating physical contact with customers, remotely interacting with permitting officials (via email, mobile phone, and internet) and complying with strict social distancing requirements. Solar, storage, and EV infrastructure installers are committed to evaluating and improving these protections daily, consistent with updated guidance from the CDC and County Health officials. The Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) issued strict protocols to protect employees, customers, and the public which can be found [here](#). Installation safety measures include: Small 4-person (or fewer) crews; wearing gloves and masks; no physical contact with customers; and minimum 6 ft. employee distance to the greatest extent possible (e.g. not traveling in shared vehicles, no group lunches).

### **Imminent Need to Prepare for Wildfire Season**

As millions of Californians struggle with the challenges of staying home, life is about to get even rougher for Bay Area residents. Wildfire season and corresponding utility power outages could start as soon as June, and may be worse this year because the Forest Service is unable to perform controlled burns due to COVID-19. [The Bay Area has already experienced power outages over the last week, with more to come](#). These events underscore the imminent need for clean, distributed power during this trying time. Under normal circumstances, it takes months to design, permit, install and inspect resiliency solutions such as solar, battery storage, and electric vehicles - time frames that are already extended due to COVID-19 constraints. This problem is compounded if companies are compelled to lay off installers due to stay-at-home orders. There will be a significant delay to recruit, hire and re-train installation employees in time to serve customers as fire season approaches. Californians need access to critical clean distributed power more than ever as they become more reliant on the internet to work, educate their children, and stay connected with loved ones. To ensure systems are installed and operable in time for more widespread Public Safety Power Shutoff events, it is essential for this work to continue now.

### **Energy Savings**

As people are working from home and quarantining with their families, they are relying on home energy more than ever before. The CPUC recently indicated that increased home energy usage (15% higher than this time last year) could lead to higher bills this spring and summer. For households across the County - including physically and economically vulnerable populations - home solar (with or without a battery) provides an affordable source of energy. Leasing options allow low and moderate income customers to reduce their electricity bills without any upfront cost. Affordable multi-family housing developments, where 80% of tenants fall below 60% of area median income, are also embracing local

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<sup>1</sup> [March 28th, CISA Guidance](#)

clean energy as a way to lower costs for their tenants. Many projects are in the pipeline and ready to install this spring and deliver free or low-cost solar energy to low-income residents and bring critical bill savings to families that need it the most, and when they need it desperately.

### **Electricity as Transportation Fuel is Essential**

During this crisis, access to charging at residences and charging stations is critically important to ensure electric vehicle owners will have enough range to travel, for example, in case of an emergency or if they are designated as essential workforce. It should logically follow that as long as consumers are able to purchase electric vehicles during shelter-in-place (SIP) orders they should be able to “fuel” at charging stations just like those who drive internal combustion engines can fill up at gas stations.

Thank you again for all that you are doing during these difficult times. We appreciate you taking our issues and the following request into consideration:

***We respectfully request that the Counties confirm that solar, storage and EV installation companies are deemed essential businesses under the Order, and to explicitly include this work as essential in subsequent orders and/or order updates.***

Sincerely,

Carl Guardino  
President & CEO  
Silicon Valley Leadership Group

Nick Chaset  
CEO  
East Bay Community Energy

Bernadette Del Chiaro  
Executive Director  
California Solar and Storage Association

Beth Vaughan  
Executive Director  
The California Community Choice Association

Dr. Abdellah Cherkaoui  
Chair  
Electric Vehicle Charging Association

Alex Morris  
Executive Director  
California Energy Storage Alliance

Amisha Rai  
Managing Director  
Advanced Energy Economy

Rick Umoff  
Senior Director & Counsel, California  
Solar Energy Industries Association

Stanley Greschner  
Chief Policy and Business Development Officer  
GRID Alternatives

Miya Yoshitani  
Executive Director  
Asian Pacific Environmental Network

Eddie Ahn  
Executive Director  
Brightline Defense



DATE: April 22, 2020

TO: Dr. Christopher Farnitano, Contra Costa County Health Officer  
David Twa, Contra Costa County Administrator  
Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors  
Antioch City Council  
Brentwood City Council  
Clayton City Council  
Concord City Council  
Danville Town Council  
El Cerrito City Council  
Hercules City Council  
Lafayette City Council  
Martinez City Council  
Moraga Town Council  
Oakley City Council  
Orinda City Council  
Pinole City Council  
Pittsburg City Council  
Pleasant Hill City Council  
Richmond City Council  
San Ramon City Council  
Walnut Creek City Council

FR: Bernadette Del Chiaro  
CALSSA Executive Director  
bernadette@calssa.org  
916-765-3224

We understand the pressure you are under to balance health risks and household economic security. Isolation is working to reduce hospitalizations and death, but it is also causing families to lose their livelihoods, which triggers other public health impacts. As we near the scheduled end of the current health order, and as you are facing a decision on what activities to allow in the next phase of mandatory isolation, we ask that you consider the work of the solar energy industry as both capable of being done safely and as an essential service within our energy infrastructure.

To the extent that outdoor solar installation work has been allowed to proceed in the county or your city or town, we thank you. As the attached document illustrates, our companies have taken the COVID19-related physical distancing and CDC guidelines to heart and have developed extensive workplace protocols to protect their workers and customers and minimize the spread of the disease.

To the extent our outdoor installation work has not been allowed to proceed in your county, we encourage you to place solar installation work in the first round of eased restrictions in May. Solar installation can be done safely, without violating health guidelines.

- Solar installation is done almost entirely outside. Even batteries tied to rooftop solar systems are normally installed outside or in garages.
- Small crews can arrive at the job site in separate vehicles and work on separate sections of the project.
- Warehouses can be run with minimal staff.
- Customer interactions can be done by phone and online.
- Customers do not need to physically touch anything that is touched by our workers or even be present for the work to be completed.

Twenty-seven leading solar installers in the Bay Area recently attested to the safety practices described in the attachment to this letter. Health precautions are at the forefront of everyone's mind, and solar contractors are very sensitive to their role in the local community keeping their workers and their customers safe.

Despite these efforts, nearly every California solar company is suffering negative economic impacts due to COVID19, with around two-thirds of our contractors reporting furloughs and layoffs of employees. The loss of talent will make it more difficult to serve customers as fire season approaches and California is hit with another economic disaster, not to mention the potential challenge of the electric grid going down during a shelter in place order.

On the other side of the economic coin, solar contractors can provide immediate economic stimulus into local communities. Smaller rooftop solar projects are "shovel ready" by nature and can be revved up and energized quickly. This light construction employs people from the county and reduces energy costs for customers, creating a multiplier effect in the local economy. One of the best recipes for economic revival is to allow business activity that is local in nature, physically isolated by nature, and allows dollars to circulate in a community.

It is also essential that customer-sited generation continue to grow in response to wildfires and prolonged blackouts in order to avoid other public health problems. The need for community energy resilience is urgent and requires continuous effort to expand local generating capacity. Not all power plants are large, and the energy sector is not one-dimensional, as acknowledged by the federal Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency guidelines that have been referenced by the California state health order. For individual customers that have particular needs for uninterrupted power supply, installing onsite energy sources is essential to maintain the operation of residences and essential businesses. For communities as a whole, increased local energy resources can provide alternatives to an increasingly congested and unreliable grid.

Thank you again for your hard work and dedication. We look forward to working with you to build stronger, healthier communities. Let me know if there is any further information I can provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernadette Del Chiaro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bernadette" being more prominent than the last name.

Bernadette Del Chiaro

## **Safety Guidelines for Solar Installation**

### **Customer Interactions**

We have instituted “zero contact” sales and installations process. Instead of sitting across the kitchen table to negotiate a contract, we utilize online video services and electronic contracts and bids. When scheduling work at the job site, customers are asked if anyone has or is suffering from any sickness or symptoms and if so, projects are rescheduled. Instead of meeting with the customer face-to-face when our crews arrive at the job site, we pre-arrange with the customer how to prep the property for ease of entry to eliminate physical contact with customers. Finally, common area surfaces and contact points such as gate handles, latches, enclosures, etc. are wiped down before and after our work.

### **Employee Management**

All of our back-office employees work from home, and we allow only those employees necessary to maintain the core functioning and safety of the workplace into the office. As a result, the vast majority of our non-construction employees are sheltering in place at home and performing their duties as best they can remotely. The employees that are required to come into our places of business are reminded daily of the importance of keeping their distance, washing their hands frequently, and staying home when sick. We have increased hand washing stations at all of our facilities and aggressively sanitize the workplace daily.

### **Construction & Maintenance**

The construction and maintenance of distributed solar energy and energy storage systems is different than many other types of construction. Our crews are small, typically two to four in size for residential work and typically four to six for commercial, though some larger projects require larger crews. Our crews operate as a team, under strict supervision, and usually do not change day-to-day. Typical installation and maintenance can be performed with zero physical contact with customers. Our crews drive to the site in separate vehicles and maintain their distance from one another throughout the day. They are asked to bring a home-packed lunch to work and their work is done with no physical contact with the building owner. They stagger shifts, practice physical distancing (keeping at least 6 ft. apart to the greatest extent practicable), conduct frequent stand-down meetings wearing safety gear (e.g. gloves, masks, full clothing) and vigilantly clean workspaces. We are committed to evaluating and improving these protections on an ongoing basis, including incorporation of updated guidance from OSHA, the CDC and County Health officials.

### **Permitting and Interconnection**

When available to us, we utilize online permitting submittal and review processes, making it possible to seek permission from local building departments entirely online. The vast majority of our projects are simple and standardized and do not require large printouts. Most of our commercial work has already been through review, with ongoing work for housing projects and other essential construction happening safely on a case by case basis in close coordination with local building departments. After installation is complete, we attempt to coordinate with inspectors to hold virtual inspections or avoid all

interaction between crew members and inspectors when visiting the site. We are also using “exterior only” site surveys drone technology to capture visual inspections of our work. The majority of our interactions with the local utilities is remote.

### **Supplies**

Our warehouses are reduced to skeleton crews with staggered shifts, keeping only those workers needed to maintain a minimum supply of equipment. Those crews adhere to the same physical distancing guidelines including maintaining six feet of distance, frequent handwashing, and orders to stay home when presented with any signs of illness.

Alex McDonough, Vice President Policy  
Sunrun  
San Francisco, CA

Eric Piekarczyk, President  
Synergy Power  
Livermore, CA

Andrew McNamara, Executive Vice  
President  
Bright Power  
Oakland, CA

Gary Gerber, CEO  
Sun Light & Power  
Berkeley, CA

Barry Cinnamon, CEO  
Cinnamon Energy Systems  
Campbell, CA

Greg Cordero, President  
Poco Solar Energy, Inc.  
Santa Clara, CA

Bryan Raymond, President  
Diablo Solar Services, Inc.  
Martinez, CA

Greg Kennedy, President  
Occidental Power  
San Francisco, CA

Charles Adams, Owner  
Albion Power Company  
San Francisco, CA

Jeff Parr, CEO  
Solar Technologies  
San Ramon, CA

Cody Oram, Director Field Safety &  
Quality  
Vivint Solar  
San Jose, CA

Jerret Goodale, CEO  
SunOn Energy  
Anderson, CA

Dan Martin, Founder & CEO  
Amped Solutions, Inc.  
San Francisco, CA

Joshua Weiner, CEO  
SepsiSolar, Inc.  
Fremont, CA

Dave Haskell, Senior Partner  
Symmetric Energy  
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Ken Mahaffey, Executive Vice President  
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Ken Stout, VP Strategy & Business Dev  
Alpha Energy Management  
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Man Kit Wu, Head of CA Operations  
YSG Solar  
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Mark Byington, CEO  
Cobalt Power Systems, Inc.  
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Randy Zechman, CEO  
Clean Solar  
San Jose, CA

Raul Villabos, Director  
Green Wolf Energy  
Hayward, CA

Rob Lamkin, CEO  
Cool Earth Solar  
Pleasanton, CA

Scott Siemer, President  
Just Leaks  
San Jose, CA

Sheryl Lane, COO/Project Director  
Earth Electric, Inc.  
San Jose, CA

Stan Greschner, Chief Policy & Market  
Development  
GRID Alternatives  
Berkeley, CA

Steve Pariani, President  
Solar Pro Energy Systems  
Burlingame, CA

Tony Diaz, CEO  
Century Roof & Solar  
Hayward, CA