Dear Georgeanne White,

The California Energy Commission (CEC) is reaching out to inform and remind cities and counties throughout California about a way to innovate permitting processes to help meet the state's clean energy goals. Last year, the California Legislature passed the Solar Access Act (SB-379), requiring cities and counties to automate their permitting for standard residential solar systems. Automated permitting will reduce delays and lower the cost of installing solar, leading to more solar adoption. The additional solar will help increase grid reliability to avoid power outages.

This letter provides additional information about the Solar Access Act and resources to help with compliance.

About the Solar Access Act

- Requires cities and counties to implement an online platform for permitting residential rooftop solar panels and batteries paired with solar. The platform must automate the process of verifying the solar and battery systems are up to code and then issue the permit instantaneously for construction to begin.
- Requires cities and counties with more than 50,000 residents to comply by September 30, 2023. Cities with 5,000-50,000 residents must comply by September 30, 2024.
- Allows cities and counties to comply by implementing their own platform or by adopting SolarAPP+, a platform designed by the Department of Energy to provide cities and counties an easy pathway to comply. If cities and counties *implement* their own, the platform must be functionally equivalent to SolarAPP+ for both solar panels and batteries paired with solar.
- Requires cities and counties report to the CEC when they become compliant with the Solar Access Act. Cities and counties must report annually on their solar permitting. The CEC adopted guidelines in April 2023 outlining this process, available at https://www.energy.ca.gov/programs-and-topics/programs/residential-solar-permit-reporting-sb-379.

About SolarApp+

- Eliminates permitting timelines, which are frequently more than 60 days, removing disruptions to project planning, allowing solar to be installed faster, and reducing the instances where permitting problems cause projects to be cancelled entirely.
- Designed by the Department of Energy to have a self-onboarding process. Cities and counties begin by registering at https://solarapp.nrel.gov/register and following the prompts. The website provides a library of onboarding articles.
- Offers building department staff an online course on inspecting a SolarAPP+ system for continuing education units.
- Has a team of staff devoted to helping cities and counties onboard. Please email any questions to team@solar-app.org.

Resources for cities and counties

- The California Energy Commission's [CalAPP](#) program provides grants to cities and counties to adopt SolarAPP+ or functionally equivalent software. While SolarAPP+ is a free platform for cities and counties to adopt and use, the CalAPP grants are designed to cover the resources spent on adoption (e.g., staff time).
- Building departments that integrate SolarAPP+ with their permit tracking software platforms or adopt new platforms that can integrate with SolarAPP+ (e.g., EnerGov, Accela, E-TRAKiT, Opengov) can cover up to three years of subscription costs with their CalAPP grant.
- The CalAPP grants are non-competitive and range between $40,000 and $100,000 depending on population. The deadline to apply is May 1, 2023. The grant [application](#) is short, and we encourage you to apply soon.
- For questions about CalAPP, reach out to CalAPP@energy.ca.gov.

Benefits of Automated Permitting

- The California Solar & Storage Association [estimates](#) that the broad adoption of SolarAPP+ would lower the cost of a typical $21,100 solar system for homeowners by $1,200 and lower the cost of a typical $33,600 solar plus battery system by $2,300.
- SolarAPP+ eliminates permitting timelines, which are frequently more than 60 days, removing disruptions to project planning, allowing solar to be installed faster, and reducing the instances where permitting problems cause projects to be cancelled entirely.
- Reduced costs and delays can lead to more solar adoption. The City of San Jose, for example, saw a six-fold increase in solar installations after it automated permitting in 2015, which was the inspiration for SolarAPP+.

We encourage you to participate and reach out with any questions to the CEC's CalAPP staff (CalAPP@energy.ca.gov) or the Department of Energy's SolarAPP+ staff (team@solar-app.org). Please note that the deadline to apply for CalAPP grants is May 1, 2023.

Sincerely,

Noemí Gallardo, Commissioner
California Energy Commission

[California Energy Commission](#)