



March 30, 2019

TO: Permitting officials

RE: Online permitting and inspections

I work at the California Solar & Storage Association on overcoming permitting hurdles for solar contractors and jurisdictions. I hope you and your team are weathering the COVID-19 outbreak as best as possible.

As a result of social distancing measures, the solar industry is seeing building departments increasingly move parts of the permitting process online. We are obviously interested in that and would like to do what we can to work collaboratively with you to figure out best practices and inform the marketplace. Based on interactions with building departments throughout the state, below are some examples of things that can be done online. We ask that you consider implementing these virtual permitting processes during the COVID-19 pandemic, if you haven't already:

- 1) Accept permit applications online:** Set up an email address that can accept permit applications or set up an online platform – another department might have one you can use.
- 2) Issue permits online:** Plan checkers can review applications and issue permits or corrections via email or the online platform.
- 3) Allow application fees to be paid virtually:** Accept payments online or over the phone. Departments like property tax collection might be able to help. Other options include accepting checks via the mail and prepayment of fees based on volume expectations.
- 4) Shift inspections to photos or live videos:** Contractors can take photos of the installation and/or provide the inspector a live video tour (via Google Hangouts, Skype, Facetime, etc.) for inspection. Here are some examples from [Los Angeles County](#), [New York](#), and [North Las Vegas](#).
- 5) Consider a one-page permitting application:** Many jurisdictions have already adopted an electronic permitting application, which allows for a simplified and fast online approval. Here's an [example](#) from the City of Oceanside.

Please let us know the extent to which you have implemented these approaches and what you are considering for the near future. Let us know if there is any way we can help or if there are questions we can find answers to.

Thank you,

/s/ Benjamin Davis
Policy Associate

CALSSA is part the SolarAPP coalition, the goal of which is to enable solar adoption by making it easier for cities, counties, and utilities to quickly and safely approve solar projects for install and operation on the grid. Our first project is led by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), which is building an online permit platform that will enable automated compliance reviews and instant permit approval. To learn more about NREL's online solar permitting tool, please join NREL's webinar on [April 14th, 2020 10 AM - 11 AM PT](#).