DATE: April 22, 2020

TO: County Health Officers
    County Administrators
    County Supervisors
    City Council Members

FR: Bernadette Del Chiaro
    CALSSA Executive Director

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-eight 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,

Bernadette Del Chiaro
bernadette@calssa.org
916-765-3224
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

Andrew McNamara, Executive Vice President  
Bright Power  
Oakland, CA

Barry Cinnamon, CEO  
Cinnamon Energy Systems  
Campbell, CA

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

Charles Adams, Owner  
Albion Power Company  
San Francisco, CA

Cody Oram, Director Field Safety & Quality  
Vivint Solar  
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Dan Martin, Founder & CEO  
Amped Solutions, Inc.  
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Dave Haskell, Senior Partner  
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Eric Piekarczyk, President  
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Gary Gerber, CEO  
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Greg Cordero, President  
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Greg Kennedy, President  
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Jeff Parr, CEO  
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Jerret Goodale, CEO  
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Joshua Weiner, CEO  
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Ken Mahaffey, Executive Vice President  
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Ken Stout, VP Strategy & Business Dev  
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Mark Byington, CEO  
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Randy Zechman, CEO  
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Raul Villabos, Director  
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Rob Lamkin, CEO  
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Scott Siemer, President  
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Sheryl Lane, COO/Project Director  
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