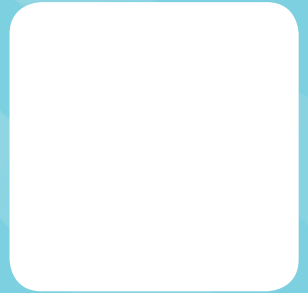
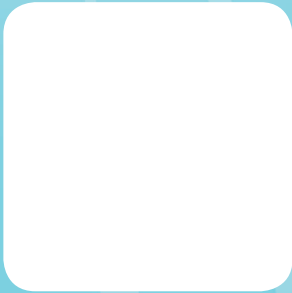
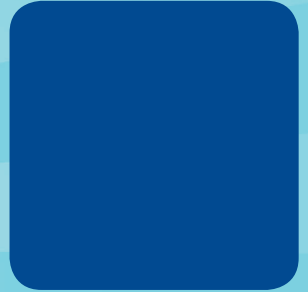


California Solar Permitting Guidebook

Improving Permit Review
and Approval for Small Solar Systems



Spring 2015
Second Edition
(Updated)

Developed by:
Solar Permitting Task Force
Governor's Office of Planning and Research
Office of Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.

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Improving Permit Review and Approval for Small Solar Systems



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PREFACE

California is a world leader in renewable energy generation. Solar and wind power, as well as emerging technologies such as biomass and fuel cells, are transforming California. Renewable energy is helping to power the state's economy, reducing our state's reliance on imported energy sources and decreasing air pollution.

California's state and local governments have set aggressive goals to expand renewable energy. In 2011, California adopted a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) requiring that at least one-third of the state's electricity come from clean energy sources by 2020. Many local governments also have their own targets for renewable energy. Additionally, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. has set a specific goal of developing 12,000 megawatts of small-scale, localized renewable electrical power (often called "distributed generation") in California by 2020.

Small-scale renewable energy benefits California communities. It increases energy reliability for residents and businesses by generating electricity near where it is consumed. This type of energy can also provide stable electricity prices for consumers and creates thousands of jobs across California.

In order to expand small-scale renewable energy across California, Governor Brown instructed the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to help remove barriers to its development. One such barrier is the patchwork of permitting requirements for small solar installations throughout the state. Solar energy systems have been installed in California for decades, and their technology, as well as the methods to install and maintain them, is well established. As a result, permitting for these small and simple solar projects should be as simple and standardized as possible.

The first California Solar Guidebook was published in 2012, the result of a collective effort of stakeholders from local government, the building industry, professional associations, solar companies, utility providers and state regulatory agencies. Many local permitting agencies adopted practices and standard documents outlined in the Guidebook. These practices made installing solar less expensive and increased expansion of this technology in California.



Despite these improvements, however, costs to permit solar are still higher than necessary. Increased solar adoption has inundated many jurisdictions with permit applications and inspection requests. Solar technologies have changed, new laws have been passed and codes have been revised. This second edition of the Guidebook addresses those changes, improves upon the recommended process for expedited permitting of solar PV systems, and adds information about solar water heating systems.

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