

Supporting Customer Solar

BY TONY EARLEY, CHAIRMAN & CEO, PG&E CORPORATION

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, people have used their yards and fields to harvest solar energy from the ground beneath their feet, in the form of food. Today, more and more of us are looking to our rooftops to harvest the sun's rays in the form of clean electricity.

In fact, at PG&E, we're plugging in a new solar customer about every 11 minutes.

California now leads the nation in rooftop solar, with more than a quarter million customer installations, both residential and commercial. Their combined output is fast becoming a key source of clean power for the entire system, capable of meeting the needs of more than half a million households.

We want to see it grow even faster. But having helped more than 175,000 of our customers go solar—more than 25 percent of all of the solar customers in the U.S.—we at Pacific Gas and Electric know what it takes to make this happen.

Growth will depend on a number of things: lower prices on solar panels; innovation in rooftop installations to reduce costs; streamlined

It will also require that we continue investing to modernize California's grid, so that we can maximize customers' ability to sell energy back to us when they produce more power than they need, and buy it at times when their rooftop panels aren't producing. To support this grid investment, we must rethink utility rate structures as well.

One of the things we at PG&E are doing is making the process easier than ever, slashing the average time to process a new connection application to five days—compared to an industry average of four weeks. A new website will further reduce wait times and processing costs for customers and installers. We also provide an online solar calculator so customers can estimate the savings they'll realize from going solar and size their system accurately.

Even with faster growth in customer solar in years to come, there's still a catch: not everyone who wants solar energy is in a position to get it. Some homeowners can't afford the cost. Many lack the rooftop space or optimal exposure for solar panels, while others are urban renters in multi-unit buildings.

For the first group, PG&E can offer special help. We've provided \$9.6 million over the past 10 years to put solar panels on new Habitat for Humanity homes across the Bay Area. For the second, a new industry model, called community solar, promises to give every customer an opportunity to share the output from new solar generation facilities in or near their neighborhood.

PG&E will begin offering such a program early next year. It will give customers an option to buy up to 100 percent renewable energy from

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permit processing; and cooperation from local utilities, which are responsible for interconnecting customers' solar panels to the neighborhood electric grid.



local solar projects for a small premium (about two to three cents per kilowatt-hour) on their monthly bill. Alternatively, customers will be able to sign up with independent solar project developers in their community to buy clean energy through PG&E.

Solar energy can't solve all of our clean energy needs—something has to keep the lights on at night—but working together, we can continue to take greater advantage of this resource, integrating more of it into our overall power supply as we build a new energy ecosystem for the 21st century.

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