

Joint release by the City of Santa Rosa and Solar Sonoma County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Santa Rosa Improves Plan Review and Inspection Efficiencies for Solar Permits

On January 1, 2011 the City implemented enforcement of the California State Fire Marshal Guideline for Fire Safety Elements of Solar Photovoltaic Systems. The purpose of the requirements are to provide for Firefighter and system safety during emergency incidents. These requirements were developed in 2007/2008 in cooperation with the Solar Industry, State Fire Marshal's Office, Local Building and Fire Code Officials. The County of Sonoma and several Sonoma County Cities adopted similar language in an effort to provide consistent application of the requirements throughout the County.

Since adoption, City Staff has taken a proactive approach working within the City and within various County organizations such as the Sonoma County Fire Prevention Officers, Redwood Empire Association of Code Officials and Solar Sonoma County to meet the interests of the code requirements and industry interests.

In an effort to streamline permitting, the City's Community Development Building Division will begin enforcing the fire regulations during plan review and inspection. This change will allow faster service at the counter and eliminate the current Fire review fee. Requests for alternate methods outside the current regulations will continue to require Fire Department review.

Interim Fire Chief Mark McCormick noted, "There has been a cooperative effort on the part of industry and the City to improve the submittals and compliance of solar installation Firefighter safety requirements. We are at a point in the transition that we believe we can improve our review and inspection efficiency for the City and industry through this change."

Solar Sonoma County (SSC) is an organization that supports solar and energy efficiency-related policy issues, educates and trains community members in these fields, advocates for a rapidly growing industry, and acts as a clearinghouse for clean energy activity in Sonoma County. Executive Director Alison Healy shared, "I am very pleased to be sharing this good news with the public. "

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