



News Release

Loma Prieta and San Francisco Bay Chapters
Palo Alto, CA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sierra Club Launches Campaign to Encourage Cities in Silicon Valley to Lower Solar Permit Fees for Non-residential Systems

The Sierra Club (Loma Prieta and San Francisco Bay chapters) has initiated a campaign to encourage municipalities in Silicon Valley to facilitate the installation of large-scale solar power systems on non-residential structures by lowering permit fees. On 4/1/09, the Sierra Club formally asked municipalities with unreasonably high non-residential solar permit fees to consider lowering them to cost-recovery levels.

In 2008, Sierra Club volunteers surveyed all the municipalities in Alameda, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties to determine their estimated permit fees for installing a roof-mounted photovoltaic (PV) solar electric system on a non-residential building. Such structures can include commercial office buildings, stores, industrial facilities, schools, churches, government and non-profit buildings. The volunteers conducted this survey for three system sizes (8 kW, 49 kW and 131 kW). It may be the first survey published in the U.S.A. for non-residential PV permit fees.

Many of the surveyed cities have little or no experience permitting large PV systems and were unsure how to respond to this survey. Others were confident in their responses, as their governments may have formally adopted PV permit fee schedules. [NOTE: these solar permit fee policies may be partly the result of the Sierra Club's solar permit fee campaign for residential systems conducted between 2005 and 2007 in the Bay Area].

On April 1, 2009, the survey team contacted 16 municipalities that have fees greater than \$5,000 for the 131 kW system size. The team did this to notify these cities that their solar permit fees were unreasonably high and request that they review their solar permit fee calculation methods, since they might be charging fees higher than cost-recovery levels. Charging more for solar permits than the reasonable costs to administer them violates California Government Code Section 66014, which provides that fees associated with building inspections and building permits "*shall not exceed the estimated reasonable cost of providing the service for which the fee is charged.*"

Between 4/1/09 and 4/17/09, some of those 16 municipalities have confirmed they are reviewing their PV permit fee policies. Several others have promptly reduced fees to more appropriate levels.

Since local sunlight and available roof space are plentiful, only the number of installations limits the production potential of solar power. This news release and solar permit fee campaign are acknowledging city leaders for taking action to make solar energy more affordable, particularly for businesses and non-profit entities.

The attached chart shows PV permit fees for non-residential buildings for jurisdictions in the surveyed region.

Non-residential Solar Permit Fee Campaign:

http://lomaprietaglobalwarming.sierraclub.org/Solar_Initiative_Files/CommercialPVSurvey.php

THE LOMA PRIETA
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Solar Electric Permit Fees for Non-residential Systems as of 4/17/2009

(California Counties Surveyed: Alameda, San Mateo and Santa Clara)

Municipality	8 kW	Municipality	49 kW	Municipality	131 kW
San Jose	\$2,750	Cupertino**	\$11,737	Cupertino**	\$39,573
Mountain View**	\$2,200	Emeryville**	\$9,543	Emeryville**	\$24,108
Daly City	\$2,169	Daly City	\$8,426	Daly City	\$18,365
Alameda County ##	\$1,981	Alameda County ##	\$7,737	Mountain View**	\$17,100
Gilroy**	\$1,743	East Palo Alto ##	\$6,019	Gilroy**	\$15,737
Millbrae	\$1,689	Brisbane	\$5,918	Alameda County ##	\$14,399
Brisbane	\$1,666	Gilroy**	\$5,604	Brisbane	\$13,351
East Palo Alto ##	\$1,636	Mountain View**	\$5,330	East Palo Alto ##	\$12,335
Alameda (City)	\$1,609	Millbrae	\$4,955	Millbrae	\$10,104
Cupertino**	\$1,608	Sunnyvale	\$3,856	Santa Clara (City)**	\$7,568
Emeryville **	\$1,487	Santa Clara (City)**	\$3,632	Menlo Park	\$6,960
Dublin ##	\$1,257	Milpitas	\$2,776	Palo Alto**	\$6,736
Santa Clara (City)**	\$1,119	Menlo Park	\$2,755	Sunnyvale	\$6,395
Milpitas	\$945	San Jose	\$2,750	Santa Clara County ##	\$5,033
Sunnyvale	\$634	Palo Alto**	\$2,595	Alameda (City)	\$4,620
Los Gatos	\$525	Santa Clara County ##	\$2,539	Newark	\$3,322
Palo Alto**	\$520	Alameda (City)	\$2,258	Milpitas	\$2,776
Fremont ##	\$508	Newark	\$1,838	San Jose	\$2,750
Los Altos	\$474	Dublin ##	\$1,250	Dublin ##	\$2,322
Menlo Park	\$429	Los Gatos	\$535	San Leandro	\$775
Burlingame	\$416	Burlingame	\$514	Morgan Hill	\$620
Santa Clara County ##	\$382	Fremont ##	\$509	Los Gatos	\$617
San Leandro	\$350	Los Altos	\$474	Burlingame	\$612
San Mateo County	\$345	Pleasanton	\$465	Livermore	\$552
Pacifica	\$334	San Leandro	\$450	Campbell	\$525
San Mateo (City)	\$318	Livermore	\$414	Fremont ##	\$511
Piedmont	\$307	Campbell	\$375	Los Altos	\$474
Hayward	\$300	Piedmont	\$348	Pleasanton	\$465
South San Francisco	\$300	San Mateo County	\$345	Piedmont	\$420
Newark	\$279	Pacifica	\$334	San Mateo County	\$345

Livermore	\$276	Morgan Hill	\$324	Pacifica	\$334
Redwood City	\$261	San Mateo (City)	\$318	Colma	\$320
Atherton	\$250	Hayward	\$300	San Mateo (City)	\$318
Morgan Hill	\$240	South San Francisco	\$300	Hayward	\$300
Campbell	\$225	Redwood City	\$261	South San Francisco	\$300
Oakland	\$220	Atherton	\$250	Redwood City	\$261
Colma	\$205	Oakland	\$220	Atherton	\$250
San Carlos	\$176	Colma	\$216	Oakland	\$220
Pleasanton	\$173	San Carlos	\$176	San Carlos	\$176
Berkeley ##	\$120	Berkeley ##	\$120	Berkeley ##	\$120
Portola Valley	\$97	Portola Valley	\$97	Portola Valley	\$97
Saratoga	\$92	Saratoga	\$92	Saratoga	\$92
Woodside	\$30	Woodside	\$30	Woodside	\$30
Belmont	\$0	Belmont	\$0	Belmont	\$0
Foster City	\$0	Foster City	\$0	Foster City	\$0
Hillsborough	\$0	Hillsborough	\$0	Hillsborough	\$0
Los Altos Hills	\$0	Los Altos Hills	\$0	Los Altos Hills	\$0
Monte Sereno	\$0	Monte Sereno	\$0	Monte Sereno	\$0
Albany*		Albany*		Albany*	
Half Moon Bay*		Half Moon Bay*		Half Moon Bay*	
San Bruno*		San Bruno*		San Bruno*	
Union City#		Union City#		Union City#	
Average	\$680	Average	\$2,062	Average	\$4,631

* Unknown by municipality

** Fees under review

No Response to survey

Survey fee responses updated April 2009 (for various reasons)

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