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Vermont Fire Academy Instructors Attend Solar Training

The Clean Energy States Alliance, the Vermont Public Service Department, and the Vermont Fire Academy hosted a workshop on rooftop solar photovoltaics for Vermont Fire Academy fire safety instructors

Montpelier, VT — Rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) systems present special considerations for firefighters. A workshop held today at the Vermont Fire Academy provided fire safety instructors with information they can use to teach local firefighters across the state about how to deal with fires on buildings equipped with solar PV systems. The workshop was jointly hosted by the Clean Energy States Alliance, the Vermont Public Service Department, and the Vermont Fire Academy.

Just like any new residential technology, solar PV offers unique challenges to firefighters. As rooftop PV becomes more common, firefighters need to be prepared for the challenges that this technology presents. Since PV panels can present electrical hazards for firefighters, de-energizing rooftop PV systems represents one such issue. In today's workshop, fire safety instructors learned how to recognize the difference between solar PV modules and solar thermal panels, how solar PV modules work, and how to handle them during a fire. Over the next several months, the newly trained instructors will deliver training on this topic to local fire departments across the state.

“With the huge boosts in rooftop PV deployment over the past few years, it’s important for firefighters to know how to recognize and treat PV systems in the event of a fire,” said Nate Hausman, a Project Manager for the Clean Energy States Alliance, one of the organizations that developed this workshop. “We’re glad to help bring these PV fire safety trainings to Vermont.”

“The information that will be shared will increase firefighter knowledge of solar equipment and outline safety measures when operating around solar installations”, said James Litevich, Chief of Training at the Vermont Fire Academy. “This knowledge will also aid the fire officer’s decision making process when directing fire suppression activities that involve structures with PV installations.”



“As solar becomes more integrated into our buildings and landscape, our Department is committed to working with the Fire Academy and others to ensure the projects are constructed with fire safety in mind, and that the training necessary for public safety is made available,” said Christopher Recchia, Commissioner of the Public Service Department.

The Vermont Fire Academy will begin offering PV fire training to firefighters across the state in the upcoming months, with financial support from the Public Service Department’s Clean Energy Development Fund. Those courses will be announced and more information will be available on the Vermont Fire Academy website at www.firesafety.vermont.gov/academy.

Today’s PV fire safety workshop was developed and funded through the New England Solar Cost-Reduction Partnership, a project under the U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative Rooftop Solar Challenge II program. The New England Solar Cost-Reduction Partnership is working to build the regional solar market by targeting non-hardware “soft” costs for PV systems and increasing coordination across Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. You can learn more about the New England Solar Cost-Reduction Partnership at <http://www.cesa.org/projects/new-england-solar-cost-reduction-partnership>.

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About the SunShot Initiative: The U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative is a collaborative national effort that aggressively drives innovation to make solar energy fully cost-competitive with traditional energy sources before the end of the decade. Through SunShot, the Energy Department supports efforts by private companies, universities, and national laboratories to drive down the cost of solar electricity to \$0.06 per kilowatt-hour. You can learn more about the SunShot Initiative at energy.gov/sunshot.

About the Clean Energy States Alliance: The Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) is a national nonprofit coalition of public agencies and organizations working together to advance clean energy. CESA members—mostly state agencies—include many of the most innovative, successful, and influential public funders of clean energy initiatives in the country. CESA works with state leaders, federal agencies, industry representatives, and other stakeholders to develop and promote clean energy technologies and markets. CESA facilitates information sharing, provides technical assistance, coordinates multi-state collaborative projects, and communicates the positions and achievements of its members. For more information, visit www.cesa.org.

About the Vermont Public Service Department: The Public Service Department is charged with representing the public interest in energy, telecommunications, water and wastewater utility matters. The mission of the PSD is to serve all citizens of Vermont through public advocacy, planning, programs, and other actions that meet the public's need for least cost, environmentally sound, efficient, reliable, secure, sustainable, and safe energy, telecommunications, and regulated utility systems in the state for the short and long term. The PSD works to advance all Vermonters' quality of life, economy and security through implementation of our statewide energy and telecommunications goals, using sound statewide energy and telecommunications



planning, strong public advocacy of the public good, and through strong consumer protection advocacy for individuals.

About the Vermont Fire Academy: The Vermont Fire Academy is a part of the Vermont Department of Public Safety, Division of Fire Safety and provides statewide firefighter training. The Vermont Fire Academy is based in Pittsford, VT with a primary focus of delivering training to responders throughout the state. The primary mission of Vermont Fire Service Training is to provide quality education and training to dedicated individuals of the Fire and Emergency Response Services, thereby reducing the loss of life and property due to fire and other related emergencies in the State of Vermont. Through research, development and delivery, we can enhance all avenues of fire service training and education. With a clear direction toward the future, utilizing concise communication, organization, teamwork and individual dedication, we will achieve our mission. For more information, visit www.firesafety.vermont.gov/academy.