



Community microgrids sanaa

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This is the moment for microgrids. As the decade comes to a close, record wildfires in California and other disasters across the country, combined with the new normal of Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS), have catapulted microgrids into the spotlight. This is the moment the Clean Coalition has evolved for as we continue our groundbreaking work on Community Microgrids- a new way of designing and operating the electric grid.

This year, our work was covered extensively, including in mainstream publications like Mother Earth News, Bisnow, and The Washington Post. Microgrids have become a topic for the general public, not just those in the energy industry.

While there is no single solution, Community Microgrids are key to bringing our communities the resilience they need. In his recent excellent Vox series on California's wildfires and power outages, David Roberts cited the Clean Coalition's work in this area, showing how much of an electric load can be kept online for extended periods - and even indefinitely -with a Community Microgrid using the right combination of solar+storage.

Community Microgrids represent a new way of designing and operating the electric grid, stacked with renewables and staged for resilience. Going beyond traditional microgrids, which typically serve a single customer, Community Microgrids can keep critical community facilities online indefinitely, thereby serving entire communities. Community Microgrids reduce dependence on long-distance transmission lines and thereby deliver an unparalleled trifecta of economic, environmental, and resilience benefits to communities.

The Clean Coalition is showcasing the energy system of the future and the benefits of Community Microgrids with our Goleta Load Pocket Community Microgrid (GLPCM), planned for a disaster-prone, transmission-vulnerable Southern California region. In Northern California, the Calistoga Community Microgrid represents a preemptive effort by a city to mitigate the impact of PSPS events. The Valencia Gardens Energy Storage (VGES) Project, located in the heart of San Francisco, shows how front-of-meter (FOM) energy storage can be effectively deployed in dense urban environments.

In staging Community Microgrids like these and more in California and elsewhere, the Clean Coalition is identifying the policy and market mechanisms and fixes needed to unleash the microgrid market:

As part of our Community Microgrid Initiative, the Clean Coalition is also advocating for building electrification. The push for electrification was a major trend this year, with the City of Berkeley's ban on gas in new buildings leading to a number of California cities following suit. Our Electrification and Community Microgrid Ready guidelines, developed this year, support this effort.

In addition to building electrification, electric vehicles and their charging infrastructure can also be key components of Community Microgrids. Electric vehicles can help provide resilience by storing and dispatching energy, as we explained in a Greentech Media article this year.

To keep lengthy power shutoffs from becoming the new normal in California, far more Community Microgrids must be deployed. This should be done in concert with other actions, as part of a multi-pronged approach that also includes reducing residential sprawl, trimming vegetation near power lines, and burying power lines.

To make our communities more resilient, we need to rely less on the expensive, vulnerable long-distance transmission lines that have been causing wildfires in California. That means more local energy, but it's not just about deploying rooftop solar. We need what the Clean Coalition's Executive Director describes as a "basket of solutions," as pv magazine reported - a combination of distribution grid upgrades, distributed rooftop solar, energy storage, and demand-side management.

No silver bullet will fix the situation in California and the grid vulnerabilities that exist across the country. But an approach that includes renewables-driven Community Microgrids, in addition to the other steps outlined here, will go a long way to making our communities more resilient and avoiding a new normal that is disruptive, costly, and dangerous.

As the Clean Coalition moves forward with our Community Microgrid Initiative, there's never been a better time to realize the potential of these deployments. All signs point to 2020 being the year that we show the world the tremendous value of Community Microgrids.

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