



News Release

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT

For Immediate Release:
Thursday, May 7, 2015

Contact: CSD: Rachel Arrezola, 916-576-0950
CalEPA: Alex Barnum, 916-324-9670
CARB: Stanley Young, 916-322-2990

Benefits of State's Growing Climate Investments Highlighted at Rooftop Solar Installation in Fresno Disadvantaged Community

Program to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions & Save Energy

FRESNO – Speaking at a rooftop solar panel installation on a low-income home, state and local officials today highlighted the impacts of new state funding for local projects that combat climate change while delivering a wide range of additional benefits from clean air to lower energy bills.

The installation in Fresno's Roosevelt neighborhood is one of the first funded with proceeds from the state's cap-and-trade program, which this year targets \$832 million for energy efficiency, public transit, affordable housing and other greenhouse gas-cutting programs statewide. At least 25 percent of those funds must be invested to benefit California's most disadvantaged communities.

"These investments will help power a brighter, healthier, and more prosperous future for Fresno and for cities like it across California," said Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de León. "SB 535 ensures that our most disproportionately impacted communities see the cost savings, job creation, and environmental benefits of clean energy policies."

"This project demonstrates the real, tangible benefits from our growing investments to fight climate change and create a healthier state for all Californians," said California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS) Secretary Diana S. Dooley. "This unique program makes investments to strengthen and protect communities that are the most burdened by pollution and the most vulnerable to its effects."

Administered by the California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD), the Low Income Weatherization Program (LIWP) was funded with \$75 million in cap-and-trade auction proceeds in the State's 2014-15 budget to install rooftop photovoltaic solar systems, solar hot water heater systems and weatherization measures. All of the funds will be used to benefit disadvantaged communities.

Fresno resident Ricarda Mendoza said she was excited to receive the solar installation on her home today in the city's Roosevelt neighborhood. Mendoza, 61, lives on a fixed income with her husband, 66, and her mother, 85.

Mendoza can expect to save about 75 percent on their electricity costs based upon the size of the system installed and her previous 12 months electricity usage. This equates to over \$1,000 annual savings for the Mendoza household.

“This program has changed our lives,” said Ricarda Mendoza. “We live on a very small income, and my husband recently became ill. The money we will save on our energy bills we will use for medications he needs. I’m also proud that we can contribute to make the environment better for all of us.”

The Mendoza home is one of an estimated 1,780 low-income households statewide that are expected to receive rooftop solar systems through the LIWP program, generating an estimated 5.5 megawatts (MW) of clean, renewable power. The program will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, save energy and put money back in the pockets of low-income Californians.

“Our program is bringing solar power to households who otherwise would be priced out of the benefits of renewable energy,” said CSD Director Linné Stout. “These low-income households will now see the benefits of clean energy including significantly reduced energy bills.”

CSD contracted with Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC) to install rooftop solar systems in disadvantaged communities in Fresno, Los Angeles, Merced, Madera, Sacramento and Tulare counties. Fresno EOC is partnering with SunPower, a California-based company, to supply the solar systems under their contract.

“The benefits of solar and this program are an example of how the State of California, Fresno EOC, and Sunpower can all work together to provide opportunity in disadvantaged communities,” said Fresno EOC CEO Brian Angus. “We are helping to improve the lives of these low-income families, providing job training in solar installations and contributing to our state’s environmental goals.”

In addition to solar measures, LIWP is expected to make nearly 18,000 low-income homes more energy efficient through weatherization. Weatherization is the process of improving the energy efficiency of a home by installing energy efficient measures like weather-stripping, insulation, caulking, window repair/replacement, refrigerator replacement, water heater repair/replacement, and heating and cooling system repair/replacement.

“The funds coming to the State from selling climate allowances are now available to bring solar power and energy savings to communities throughout the state,” said California Air Resources Board Chairman Mary D. Nichols. “By making these home improvements, the Mendoza family is helping California fight climate change.”

LIWP is one of more than a dozen programs to receive funding from cap-and-trade proceeds as part of the State’s 2014-15 budget. Under Senate Bill 535 (De León), a quarter of State proceeds must go to projects that provide a benefit to disadvantaged communities, as identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency. A minimum of 10 percent of the funds must be for projects located within those communities.

###

About CSD

Under the umbrella of the California Health and Human Services Agency, CSD’s mission is to reduce poverty for Californians by leading the development and coordination of effective and innovative programs. For more information about CSD visit www.csd.ca.gov.