

## *Training*

### **Obama Sets Goal of Training 75,000 Solar Workers; Courses Cover Electric, Fall Hazards**

**T**he White House has announced a new goal of training 75,000 people for jobs in the solar power industry by 2020 and an effort to train veterans for solar energy work at 10 military bases.

Along with learning how to install solar panels, students will receive training on fall protection, electrical safety and ergonomic hazards, a training manager told Bloomberg BNA.

President Barack Obama spoke about the initiatives April 3 standing in front of solar panels at Hill Air Force Base in Salt Lake City, one of the bases where the Solar Ready Vets program will be conducted.

Obama said these programs are a way to “train our workers for good, new jobs in the clean-energy economy.”

The solar industry is adding jobs 10 times more quickly than the rest of the economy, as solar electricity generation continues to increase and costs drop, the administration said.

The Department of Energy will partner with the Department of Defense to implement the Solar Ready Vets program, which will train military veterans to enter the solar energy field using the DOE SunShot Initiative’s Solar Instructor Training Network and DOD’s Skillbridge transition training program for military personnel.

The White House goal of training 75,000 solar workers boosts its previous goal of 50,000 workers. The new goal will build upon the work done under the Solar Instructor Training Network, which partners with 400 community colleges and has provided training for more than 1,000 instructors and 30,000 students.

**Safety Training Segment.** Joe Sarubbi, project manager for the Solar Instructor Training Network, told Bloomberg BNA April 8 that safety training is an integral part of the courses, with specific training depending on how experienced students are with electrical and construction work and the jobs for which they are preparing.

So far, courses for military service members have run four to six weeks, depending on the students’ backgrounds, Sarubbi said. Classes last all day, five days a

week, with about half of the time spent outside classrooms.

Technician courses for civilians and service members cover compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards and the National Electrical Code, Sarubbi said.

Some courses may include a section where students earn an OSHA 10-hour safety card, a requirement for construction workers in some states and cities.

One model course outline distributed by the training network and the Interstate Renewable Energy Council calls for instructors to cover such health and safety practices as appropriate protection equipment, lockout/tagout, confined space procedures, proper lifting techniques and disposal of hazardous materials.

**Solar Ready Vets Program.** The Department of Veterans Affairs will work with DOE and state agencies to get approval for post-9/11 GI Bill funding for the Solar Ready Vets program to enable veterans to participate in the program through local community colleges, which Obama said is one resource to help nearly 700,000 veterans and military spouses get a job.

Also, the Department of Labor will work with DOD to educate service members about opportunities to get solar workforce training, the White House said.

Three bases—Camp Pendleton in California, Fort Carson in Colorado and Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia—launched pilot initiatives of the Solar Ready Vets program earlier this year.

The pilot programs are training as many as 200 active military personnel who are within several months of becoming veterans, Deputy Energy Secretary Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall told reporters said April 3.

She said the program prepares participants for careers as solar photovoltaic system installers, sales representatives and system inspectors. Hill Air Force Base will be the fourth base to begin offering solar job training courses this fall.

The Solar Ready Vets program has already worked with five of the largest U.S. solar companies, including SolarCity Corp., Vivint Solar Inc., Sunrun Inc., SunEdison Inc. and SunPower Corp., to interview graduates from the Camp Pendleton pilot program. All 20 of those graduates in February received job offers from some of those companies, Sherwood-Randall said.

**Solar Industry Growth.** The solar industry has been booming. Solar electricity generation has increased 20-fold, doubling in 2014 alone, the White House said.

More than 170,000 people in the U.S. are currently employed by the industry, which hired more than 30,000 people last year, Will Craven, director of public affairs at SolarCity, a solar power provider, told Bloomberg BNA in an April 3 interview.

“That’s something stunning, like one in every 78 jobs created in America last year were in solar,” Craven said. SolarCity hired more than 500 people in March alone, he said. “Elected officials are beginning to see, since they’re on the hook for job creation, it’s hard to find anything creating more jobs than solar right now.”

Craven said the White House solar jobs initiative is “a solid plan because the industry is going to be able to

hire every single one of those people, just based on current trends.”

BY REBECCA KERN AND BRUCE ROLFSEN

To contact the reporters on this story: Rebecca Kern in Washington at [rkern@bna.com](mailto:rkern@bna.com), Bruce Rolfsen in Washington at [brolfsen@bna.com](mailto:brolfsen@bna.com)

To contact the editor responsible for this story: Heather Rothman at [hrothman@bna.com](mailto:hrothman@bna.com)

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*More information about solar worker training is available at <http://energy.gov/eere/sunshot/solar-instructor-training-network>.*

*OSHA’s website covering the solar industry is at <https://www.osha.gov/dep/greenjobs/solar.html>.*

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