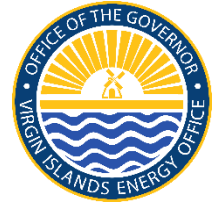




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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 23, 2020

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VI ENERGY OFFICE REMINDS DISTRIBUTED ENERGY STAKEHOLDERS TO REGISTER FOR NET ENERGY BILLING PROGRAM

The Virgin Islands Energy Office (VIEO) in partnership with VI Water and Power Authority (VIWAPA) and the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) have worked diligently in alignment with the Bryan/Roach Administration's vision to create a sustainable renewable energy industry within the territory. The closing of the Net Energy Metering (NEM) program in June of 2017 resulted in a void in sustainable renewable energy policy within the territory over the last 3 years. In June of 2020, that void in sustainable policy was filled with the roll-out of the Net Energy Billing (NEB) program. The NEB program was developed through a collaborative inter-agency working group, that sought to bring a sustainable and quantitative interconnection process to the Virgin Islands.

Through the development cycle the Working Group identified that the advances in distributed energy technology and the ambiguity in interconnection policy created an environment in which installations have persisted without the required permitting or approval framework. The implementation of the Net Energy Billing program addresses the interconnection approval void by enabling a multi-step assessment process and implementing an adjusted excess generation rate structure. In addition, Title 29 Chapter 5 of the V.I. Code specifies the obligation of DPNR to require and enforce permitting of distributed energy systems coupled structurally and/or electrically to a dwelling.

The Net Energy Billing program was officially implemented through PSC approval on June 15th 2020. Furthermore, the program applies to all future grid-connected distributed generation installations as well as all Non-Net Metering existing grid-connected installations. Specifically, all grid-connected systems that were installed following the June 2017 closure of the NEM program, and were not grandfathered into the NEM program, must be registered within the Net Energy Billing Program.

The technology eligibility applies to Grid-Tied Solar/Wind systems and Grid-Tied Solar/Wind plus Storage Systems. Additionally, Self-Consumption and/or Zero-Export system configurations are Not exempt from NEB program registration. Fully Off-Grid systems, IE complete physical & electrical isolation from the WAPA meter and Grid infrastructure are exempt from the NEB program, however under Title 29 Chapter 5 of the V.I. Code these installations will still require DPNR permitting.

“This joint communication serves to remind unregistered distributed energy stakeholders that the Net Energy Billing program is Not a voluntary program. We expect all currently installed, non-Net Meter, and future grid-connected distributed energy installations to be registered within the program,” said Kyle Fleming, Director of the VI Energy Office. “The online permitting portal strives to expedite and streamline the permitting process of installers and community stakeholders seeking to register distributed energy installations throughout the territory.”

The VIEO is in the process of scheduling in office walk-throughs of the online permitting portal, and the VIEO invite installers, electricians, and property owners to call 340-713-8436 to schedule an appointment on St. Croix and St. Thomas.

As a point of emphasis, VIWAPA line crews and meter services in partnership with DPNR inspection teams will be tasked with surveying and identifying unregistered DG installations throughout the Virgin Islands. Systems found Out-of-Compliance will be issued a Warning Sticker via DPNR. An application must be submitted within two weeks following issuance of warning from DPNR. After two weeks, if an application has not been submitted, and willful negligence has been identified, fines will be assessed to the property owner.

“We are hoping to avoid additional enforcement measures in this matter, but we must ensure compliance territory-wide,” Director Fleming said.

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