

The California Energy Commission

Core Responsibilities

The California Energy Commission is the state's primary energy policy and planning agency. The agency was established by the Warren-Alquist Act in 1974 in response to the energy crisis of the early 1970s and the state's unsustainable growing demand for energy resources.

The Energy Commission is made up of five Commissioners appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. Commissioners serve staggered five-year terms. The Governor also designates a Chair and Vice Chair as primary agency leads.

The Commissioners represent specific areas of expertise: law, environment, economics, science/engineering, and the public at large.

The Energy Commission is committed to reducing energy costs and environmental impacts of energy use – such as greenhouse gas emissions – while ensuring a safe, resilient, and reliable supply of energy.

Seven core responsibilities guide the Energy Commission as it develops California's energy policy and plans for a clean energy future:

Advancing State Energy Policy

The Energy Commission identifies and assesses major energy trends and issues in California. The agency then develops strategies and policy solutions to address these issues while advancing the state's energy goals. To assist in the development of energy infrastructure planning and state energy policy, the Energy Commission also provides electricity and natural gas demand forecasts.

Achieving Energy Efficiency

The Energy Commission promotes statewide energy efficiency by setting and updating California's building and appliance energy efficiency standards. These standards are helping California achieve its goal of having all newly constructed low-rise residential buildings be zero-net energy (ZNE) by 2020 and all new commercial buildings be ZNE by 2030. The agency also develops comprehensive strategies, plans, and policy recommendations to achieve greater energy savings in existing buildings. Furthermore, the Energy Commission administers energy efficiency incentives and building energy end-use information disclosure programs.

Certifying Thermal Power Plants

The Energy Commission is responsible for the certification and compliance of thermal power plants 50 megawatts (MW) and larger, along with the Transmission lines, fuel supply lines, and related facilities to serve them. The agency's transparent certification process consists of reviewing the engineering design and evaluating the environmental impacts of power plant projects under a certified regulatory program to ensure that projects meet all engineering and environmental regulatory requirements and reduce significant impacts. For projects it certifies, the Energy Commission oversees project construction, operation, and closure.

Investing in Energy Innovation

The Energy Commission invests in new energy innovations that are leading the way to a cleaner, safer, more affordable and more reliable energy future for California. The Energy Commission's research and development programs provide Californians with improved energy products and services. Projects are funded in the areas of efficiency, renewable, and advanced clean energy generation, energy transmission and distribution, transportation, and energy-related environmental impacts. These projects harness the talents of California companies and researchers bringing solutions to market.

Transforming Transportation

The Energy Commission offers incentives aimed at developing and deploying low-carbon alternative fuels and advanced vehicle technologies. These critical investments support the state's goal of deploying 1.5 million zero-emission vehicles (ZEV) by 2025. The Energy Commission also gathers, analyzes, and interprets data provided by the petroleum industry to monitor and educate the public about current petroleum fuel price and supply and demand issues and risks.

Developing Renewable Energy

The Energy Commission has a long history of supporting the development of clean, renewable resources to meet California's growing electricity needs. The agency provides incentives for solar photovoltaic systems on new homes in support of two of California's clean energy goals: adding 20,000 MW of renewable energy by the end of 2016 and having all new low-rise residential buildings be ZNE by 2020.

The Energy Commission also supports the state's landmark 50 percent Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS) by certifying renewable power plants and verifying the renewable electricity used to comply with the standard, and by enforcing RPS compliance for the state's publicly owned utilities.

In addition, the Energy Commission provides incentives for renewable energy planning and geothermal resources and ensures that utilities disclose information about their electricity sources to consumers.

Preparing for Energy Emergencies

The Energy Commission develops the state's energy emergency response plan and administers energy emergency contingency programs to respond effectively to California's petroleum fuel supply shortages, local energy supply disruptions and electricity demand issues.

Edmund G. Brown Jr.
Governor

Robert B. Weisenmiller, Ph.D.
Chair

Drew Bohan
Executive Director

Commissioners
Karen Douglas, J.D.
David Hochschild
J. Andrew McAllister, Ph.D.
Janea A. Scott, J.D.



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