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For Immediate Release

Maryland PSC Launches New Solar Application Portal *Paperless Process is Faster, User-Friendly*

Baltimore, MD—The Maryland Public Service Commission today launched a new online portal to receive and process solar applications. This new feature is designed to greatly reduce time and paperwork associated with submitting data and processing the applications for certification as a Solar Renewable Energy Facility (REF).

Although this transition marks a significant shift from the traditional filing, the online form collects the same data that were included on the paper applications. Users are no longer required to submit 17 copies along with the original copy, which eliminates mailing costs and allows applicants to save and upload their files to the portal.

“Establishing this electronic application platform will eliminate paper for almost all applications and reduce the overall time required to process applications,” says PSC Chief Engineer Jerry Hughes. The timeline from submission to a final decision by the Commission normally takes four to six weeks. Using the online portal, it is possible for applications to be completed much more quickly.

Other benefits include a checklist to ensure that users accurately complete each step in the process and immediate e-mail notification if applications have errors or missing information. The online format centralizes applications, which allows PSC staff to retrieve files quickly to answer questions from applicants.

Each year, the number of REF applications has increased. In 2010, the PSC processed 922 applications and 1,000 have been received so far in 2011. The vast majority of submissions are filed by solar installation companies on behalf of residential customers. The Commission expects this number to increase: both residential and commercial REF owners are eligible for the Federal Investment Tax Credit for all systems in place before December 31, 2016, and the State’s “Smart, Green, and Growing Maryland” initiative encourages residents and businesses to adopt solar energy.

A focus group of beta testers of the portal have given high ratings to the new system. On a 1-5 (poor to excellent) scale, the portal scored a rating of 4.4. All testers commented favorably on the reduced time spent to complete the application, noting an average of 10 minutes (versus 30-40 minutes) to file.

“This new process streamlines and speeds our processing of solar REF applications without sacrificing any of the engineering review by our Engineering Division. We are proud to have found a way to use our scarce resources more efficiently and to make it faster and easier to get solar arrays installed in Maryland,” says PSC Chairman Douglas Nazarian.

The portal can be accessed at the PSC website (www.psc.state.md.us) under the ‘Electric’ menu.

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