



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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An Innovative Solar One Program Empowers Vulnerable Communities with Resilient Solar + Storage

New York City, NY – Through a program funded by the Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR), NYC nonprofit Solar One and its network of installers are helping volunteer emergency responders and community organizations keep the lights on during blackouts.

Whether triggered by unprecedented storms, heatwaves, or wildfires, blackouts are becoming increasingly common and hazardous. New Yorkers who weathered Superstorm Sandy understand better than most how challenging disaster recovery can be when the grid fails. But thanks to a new approach to disaster recovery, a few NYC community centers are about to become clean, resilient power hubs.

These projects are led by Solar One, an NYC non-profit dedicated to bringing clean energy to underserved urban communities. Solar One has received U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant–Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding to implement the *Solar Power and Battery Back-up Program for Community Facilities*. Together with GOSR, qualified installers, and community leaders, this Solar One program builds resilience in front-line communities for the battle against climate change.

When the power goes out, grid-tied solar installations automatically shut down to protect utility line workers from excess power feeding back into the grid. While there are thousands of solar installations deployed on buildings in NYC, only a tiny fraction can use their solar power during blackouts due to this safety measure. When paired with batteries, however, solar can safely disconnect from the grid while still providing onsite back-up power. Battery adoption has been slow in NYC due to high costs and nebulous regulations, but following years of diligent project development, research, and technical advances, solar + storage installations are finally moving forward.

Here’s how it works. The Solar One team identifies which community facilities are the best candidates for energy storage installations. Building location, availability of outdoor space, vulnerability to flooding and blackouts, and other infrastructure considerations are all assessed. Solar One issues a Request for Proposals to installers for the most viable of these sites, aggregating sites for scalability and impact. Finally, Solar One contracts with the most qualified installer and site owner and then serves as a fiscal

liaison with GOSR, facilitating the projects from contracting to commissioning and supporting them wherever possible.

The first of these pioneering projects will be installed by Solar Liberty at four community facilities in Brooklyn and the Bronx:

- Birch Family Services (Brooklyn)
- Flatlands Volunteer Ambulance Corps (Brooklyn)
- Throggs Neck Volunteer Ambulance Corps (The Bronx)
- Villa Maria Academy (The Bronx)

Once completed, these projects will provide reliable, renewable back-up power to the buildings during future blackouts, no matter how long they last. Each site will utilize this critical power supply according to its unique strengths. For example, in the case of Throggs Neck Volunteer Ambulance Corps, maintaining building functions during blackouts so it can respond to neighborhood emergencies will be invaluable.

The nearby Villa Maria Academy has been a community hub for over 130 years. Ravaged by Superstorm Sandy, the school is keenly aware of its precarious location on the shore of Long Island Sound. A solar power and battery back-up installation will help Villa Maria offer refuge for hundreds of people during emergencies, providing lighting, cooling, device charging, and basic food services.

School Principal Sr. Teresa Barton says:

“When Superstorm Sandy knocked out our power, we had no way of servicing our students and community for about a week. We are so thankful to the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery for providing us with the solar power and energy storage that is necessary to avoid a similar circumstance in the future. We are also excited to reduce our environmental impact by using renewable energy.”

These initial projects are paving the way for many more of their kind in the future, including a second round of installations slated for development in late 2020. And these projects don't just present a new model for resilience in the face of extreme weather events – they also foster awareness and enthusiasm for urban solar + storage installations. That means energy cost savings for neighborhood organizations, more renewable energy in under-served communities, and tangible steps mitigating the effects of climate change.

If you are in the solar or storage industry and interested in these projects, please join Solar One's webinar on Monday, November 18th to learn more and discuss cultivating resilience in vulnerable communities. Please sign up [here](#) to join.

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