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Some clean energy employees are returning to work, but sector's full recovery unlikely if Congress doesn't act

- *106,300 clean energy workers returned to their jobs in June*
- *514,200 clean energy workers remain jobless in wake of COVID-19*
- *Troubling signs cloud clean energy sector's outlook; stimulus needed now*

WASHINGTON (July 10, 2020) – As the U.S. economy began to reopen in June, some employees returned to work in the clean energy sector, which had been reeling from three months of devastating job losses in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to [the latest analysis of federal unemployment filings](#) from E2 (Environmental Entrepreneurs), E4TheFuture and the American Council on Renewable Energy (ACORE).

About 106,300 jobs were added back to the economy by clean energy companies in June, according to the analysis by BW Research, leaving over half-a-million clean energy workers (514,200) out of work since March. In all, clean energy employment is still down 15 percent from the start of the year, when nearly 3.4 million Americans worked in renewable energy, energy efficiency, clean vehicles and fuels and other clean energy sectors.

While the June jobs improvement is an encouraging sign of clean energy's ability to quickly put Americans back to work, resuming a robust recovery in one of the nation's biggest employment sectors anytime soon remains unlikely without direct action by Congress. Only one out of every six clean energy jobs lost since March returned in June, and as federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds are exhausted and states are forced to close businesses again in the face of COVID-19's resurgence, more layoffs could be imminent without congressional action. According to the analysis, as many as 2.3 million clean energy workers are employed by small businesses that received PPP loans.

Other troubling trends include a sharp increase in permanent job losses, rising initial weekly unemployment claims, and COVID-19 cases spiking in states with some of the largest clean energy workforces, according to the analysis.

Before COVID-19, nearly 3.4 million Americans worked in clean energy occupations – renewable energy, energy efficiency, grid modernization, clean vehicles and fuels – in every state. That's more people than

work in real estate, banking, or agriculture in the U.S., and three times the number that work in fossil fuels. Clean energy jobs had been growing 70% faster than the overall economy from 2015-2019, [according to E2's Clean Jobs America report](#).

Bob Keefe, Executive Director of E2 said:

“We sputtered back a bit, at least temporarily, but Congress really needs to put some gas in the tank if we’re going to make it over the high hill to real economic recovery. The best way to stimulate a robust and lasting economic recovery, we know, is by focusing on clean energy in any forthcoming economic stimulus. But we’re running on fumes and running out of time. Congress must act now.”

Pat Stanton, Policy Director for E4TheFuture said:

“With an encouraging uptick in clean energy jobs for early June nationwide, it would be easy to raise hopes among our stakeholders -- but it’s likely they would be false hopes, given the many warning signs. This industry needs help short-term, so that its workers can help our country long-term. The value of clean energy deployment requires that it move forward rapidly.”

Gregory Wetstone, President and CEO of the American Council on Renewable Energy (ACORE), said:

“While last month’s numbers show a clean energy job market that stopped its free fall, we are by no means out of the woods yet. This report shows more than 82,000 in the renewable workforce remain unemployed, and thousands of jobs continue to be at risk. To help mitigate these ongoing pandemic-related impacts, the renewable sector is asking Congress to include commonsense emergency relief provisions like temporary refundability and a delay in the phasedown of renewable energy tax credits in the next round of COVID legislation.”

Phil Jordan, Vice President and Principal at BW Research Partnership, said:

“The topline number shows some short-term improvement as some clean energy workers returned to their jobs in the weeks following Memorial Day, as states largely reopened their economies. The slow rate of return despite aggressive reopening, most states now pausing or reversing their reopening plans, the importance of PPP to this sector, and perhaps most importantly, the rapid increases in the permanent unemployment – they’re all troubling issues that are major threats to a real recovery.”

National Highlights from June:

- Energy efficiency, the largest clean energy sector, experienced a 4% gain in employment, with the addition of approximately 71,800 jobs. The energy efficiency sector continues to suffer from 360,000 job losses impacting a full 15% of its workforce.
- Renewable electric power generation saw a 3.5% rise in employment, with nearly 17,300 jobs regained in June. A total of 82,400 renewable electric power generation workers (14% of the sector’s workforce) remain unemployed due to the pandemic.
- Clean fuels and clean transmission, distribution, and storage saw smaller rebounds in June, gaining 2,400 and 4,600 jobs, respectively. The complete impact of the pandemic on clean fuels and clean transmission, distribution, and storage totals 38,200 and 22,800 lost jobs from their respective, pre-pandemic employment levels. Clean fuels jobs have dropped more than 10% since March, while clean transmission, distribution, and storage jobs have dropped nearly 16% thus far.

- Clean vehicles added back less than 5% of its workforce, or 10,300 jobs in June. The clean vehicles sector continues to experience a nearly 15% decline in jobs over its pre-COVID-19 employment levels. This translates to 38,200 ongoing job losses.

Monthly Clean Energy Job Losses by Sector:

Sector	March	April	May	June	Total
Energy Efficiency	-103,298	-309,584	-18,880	+71,786	-359,976
Renewables	-23,739	-71,705	-4,272	+17,287	-82,429
Clean Vehicles	-11,399	-35,070	-2,059	+10,335	-38,193
Grid & Storage	-6,517	-19,666	-1,166	+4,561	-22,788
Clean Fuels	-2,186	-10,390	-657	+2,351	-10,882
INDUSTRY TOTAL	-147,139	-446,416	-27,035	+106,320	-514,270

State and Local Highlights from June:

- California had the largest increase, with 5% of its clean energy workforce or 19,800 jobs returning in June. Texas, Michigan, North Carolina, and Florida each added nearly 6,000 clean energy jobs in June.
- States that have fared better than average as a percent of their workforce include North Carolina, Michigan, and North Carolina, all growing about 6% or more in June.
- Alaska, Wyoming, New Hampshire, and Montana saw the smallest growth, all with less than 250 jobs gained over the past month.

The data analyzed for this report did not include workers who had their hours slashed and are now significantly underemployed.

For more information [click here](#) – including breakdowns by state, county and metro area – or for interview requests, please contact Michael Timberlake (913-645-9103; mtimberlake@e2.org) or Alex Frank (703-276-3264; afrank@hastingsgroup.com).

Background

The analysis expands on data from the [2020 U.S. Energy and Employment Report \(USEER\)](#) produced by the Energy Futures Initiative (EFI) in partnership with the National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO), using data collected and analyzed by the BW Research Partnership. The report was released in March 2020 and is available at www.usenergyjobs.org. E2 and E4TheFuture are partners on the annual USEER, the fifth installment of the energy survey first released by the Department of Energy in 2016 and subsequently abandoned under the Trump administration.

Previous E2, E4TheFuture, ACORE Clean Energy Unemployment Reports

- [Clean Energy & COVID-19 Economic Crisis | May 2020 Impact Analysis](#)
- [Clean Energy & COVID-19 Economic Crisis | April 2020 Impact Analysis](#)

- [Clean Energy & COVID-19 Economic Crisis | March 2020 Impact Analysis](#)

For policy recommendations from E2 on building America's economy back better and faster through clean energy visit E2's [Build Back Better](#) homepage.

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[Environmental Entrepreneurs \(E2\)](#) is a national, nonpartisan group of business leaders, investors, and professionals from every sector of the economy who advocate for smart policies that are good for the economy and good for the environment. Our members have founded or funded more than 2,500 companies, created more than 600,000 jobs, and manage more than \$100 billion in venture and private equity capital. For more information, see www.e2.org or follow us on Twitter at [@e2org](#).

[E4TheFuture](#) works for clean, efficient and safe energy solutions. A nonprofit organization, we promote energy efficiency, renewables, demand management, energy storage and electric vehicles to advance climate protection and economic fairness. We work to achieve an energy economy that is sustainable, lower cost, and resilient. Our "Faces of EE" initiative shines a light on energy efficiency professionals nationwide. Visit www.E4TheFuture.org or follow us on Twitter at [@E4TheFuture](#) and [@FacesofEE](#).

Founded in 2001, the [American Council on Renewable Energy \(ACORE\)](#) is the nation's premier pan-renewable organization uniting finance, policy and technology to accelerate the transition to a renewable energy economy. For more information, please visit www.acore.org.