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Nearly 500K Clean Energy Workers Remain Out of Work After Only 13K Jobs Returned in August

- *14% of clean energy workforce still jobless as industry nears slow season*
- *August growth rate far below 2020 projections made before COVID-19*

WASHINGTON (September 14, 2020) – After three months of lackluster job growth, nearly 500,000 U.S. clean energy workers (490,341) remain jobless as the sector struggles to recover. Just 13,600 jobs were added in August, leaving 14% of the clean energy sector’s pre-COVID-19 workforce unemployed as the industry nears the traditionally slow winter months.

Incorporating July’s revised figure of 10,400 added jobs,* less than 5% of the remaining clean energy jobs lost nationwide have returned since June’s short-lived surge when nationwide reopenings began. The new numbers provide further indication that clean energy — which had been one of the nation’s fastest-growing job sectors — faces a long recovery, according to [the latest analysis of federal unemployment filings](#) prepared for E2 (Environmental Entrepreneurs), E4TheFuture and the American Council on Renewable Energy (ACORE) by BW Research Partnership.

Despite the reopened economy, the monthly report finds just one out of every five clean energy jobs lost between March and May has come back. In August, clean energy job growth remained under 1% in every state in the U.S., with 23 states and the District of Columbia adding fewer than 100 jobs each. Before COVID-19 struck, clean energy employers nationwide expected to add nearly 178,000 jobs in 2020 — or 14,800 every month — according to employer surveys conducted in late 2019.

While the August report shows some signs of growth, weekly unemployment claims remain at historic highs, and long-term and permanent unemployment rates continue to rise. With federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds all but exhausted, more layoffs could be imminent without congressional action.

Before COVID-19, nearly 3.4 million Americans across all 50 states and the District of Columbia worked in clean energy occupations, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, grid modernization, clean vehicles and fuels. That’s more people than work in real estate, banking or agriculture in the U.S., and three times the number of Americans working in fossil fuels. Clean energy jobs had been growing two times faster than the overall economy from 2017-2019, [according to E2’s Clean Jobs America report](#).

Sandra Purohit, Advocacy Director at E2 said:

“These numbers continue to sound the alarm that the critical clean energy sector needs support and needs it fast. Not only are we still missing nearly half-a-million jobs in what was one of the fastest job-creating engines, we’re missing out on the tens of thousands of new jobs the sector was set to create in 2020 before the crisis. Without support, this impact will last far beyond the pandemic.”

Pat Stanton, Policy Director for E4TheFuture said:

“While any net return of jobs is welcome, let’s remember that energy efficiency jobs are still down by more than 345,000 from the start of this year. If it weren’t for the pandemic, this sector would likely have grown by at least 25,000 jobs from March until now.”

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

“Renewable energy workers have been suffering double-digit unemployment due to COVID-19 since March, negatively impacting every single state’s economy. Our ask to Congress is a simple one – we need temporary refundability of renewable energy tax credits and a delay in their scheduled phasedown. Enacting these commonsense emergency relief measures into law would get these hard-working Americans back on the job and help power our nation’s economic recovery.”

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

“The clean energy economy is not adding jobs at a pace that brings us anywhere near recovery territory. The lack of meaningful, sustained job growth in the sector, despite widespread economic reopening across the U.S., suggests that most of the nearly 500,000 job losses are at serious risk of becoming permanent.”

Monthly Clean Energy Job Losses by Sector:

Sector	March	April	May	June	July	August	Total
Energy Efficiency	-103,298	-309,584	-18,880	+71,786	+6,836	+8,116	-345,024
Renewables	-23,739	-71,705	-4,272	+17,287	+1,918	+2,571	-77,942
Clean Vehicles	-11,399	-35,070	-2,059	+10,335	+896	+2,182	-35,116
Grid & Storage	-6,517	-19,666	-1,166	+4,561	+428	+482	-21,878
Clean Fuels	-2,186	-10,390	-657	+2,351	+296	+205	-10,381
INDUSTRY TOTAL	-147,139	-446,416	-27,035	+106,320	+10,373	+13,556	-490,341

Clean Energy Job Losses by State:

State	Total Losses	Percent of Clean Energy Workforce
California	84,439	15.3%
Georgia	27,058	31.3%
Florida	25,650	15.3%
Michigan	23,871	18.0%

Texas	23,406	9.5%
North Carolina	20,157	17.6%
Pennsylvania	18,290	18.8%
Washington	17,979	20.2%
Ohio	15,965	13.8%
New York	15,674	9.6%

State and Sector Impacts

Energy efficiency continued to lead total job growth in August, followed by renewable energy and clean vehicles. However, energy efficiency experienced the smallest percentage gain (0.4%) as renewable energy saw a 0.5% rise and clean vehicles added back 1.0% of its workforce. Except for clean fuels, at least 13.2% of every clean energy sector’s pre-COVID-19 workforce remains out of work.

More than 40 states continue to suffer double-digit unemployment in clean energy, with seven states seeing clean energy unemployment at 20% or more. Georgia continues to suffer over 31% unemployment in clean energy, followed by Kentucky at nearly 29%. In August, Massachusetts led all states with the highest percentage growth in its workforce at 0.9%, while California once again had the largest total increase in jobs with 3,100 positions added (0.7%). Just two states (New York and California) gained over 1,000 jobs, while 10 states added fewer than 50 jobs.

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

**The July unemployment memo, which has been revised to incorporate the latest figures from the federal government, is available [here](#).*

For more information, including breakdowns by state, county and metro area, [click here](#). For interview requests, please contact Michael Timberlake (913-645-9103; mtimberlake@e2.org); Alex Frank (703-276-3264; afrank@hastingsgroup.com); or Alex Hobson (202-594-0706; hobson@acore.org)

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