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Job losses from COVID-19 crisis eliminate years of rapid clean energy job growth

Minnesota's clean energy industry will play a vital role in state's economic recovery

- *Minnesota entered 2020 with 61,805 clean energy workers*
- *11,546 clean energy workers across Minnesota now unemployed*
- *Before COVID-19, clean energy jobs were growing 2.5 times faster than overall economy*

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN – Following a year of rapid job growth, 11,546 Minnesota clean energy workers have filed for unemployment since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March. The numbers come from a recent analysis of [Department of Labor data](#) released June 15 by E2 (Environmental Entrepreneurs), the American Council on Renewable Energy (ACORE), E4TheFuture and BW Research Partnership.

Today, Clean Energy Economy MN (CEEM) released Minnesota's fifth annual ***Clean Jobs Midwest 2020 Report*** which illustrates the job losses represent 18 percent of Minnesota's clean energy workforce. According to the new report, clean energy has been one of Minnesota's biggest and fastest-growing employment sectors, growing 6 percent since 2017. In the last year, the industry added 1,147 jobs totaling 61,805 clean energy jobs in Minnesota pre-COVID-19.

But the unemployment claims since March are now 3.3 times the number of clean energy jobs created since 2017. Despite the heavy toll COVID-19 has exacted on the industry, CEEM Executive Director Gregg Mast says the clean energy business community has shown its ability to help restart the economy in the past, and he's confident the strength of the industry will re-emerge as a key figure to help repower Minnesota's economy again.

"Over the past several years, Minnesota's clean energy sector has consistently added jobs at a faster rate than overall statewide job growth. We fully recognize that we're not alone in feeling the economic effects of COVID-19, but we also know that clean energy businesses are uniquely situated to help repower the economy," said Mast. **"Minnesota's sizable clean energy workforce has shown its potential for rapid job creation and economic growth -- two things our state is in dire need of; we look forward to helping the state harness the power of this industry to create 100,000 jobs by 2030, creating a strong and prosperous clean energy economy that works for everyone."**

"Now more than ever, Minnesotans are seeking a brighter future of economic resilience that is built on a strong foundation of living wage careers to support our families," said Minnesota Department of Commerce Commissioner Steve Kelley. **"Minnesota workers deserve career options in renewable energy that are locally grown, have a direct and positive impact on our communities and will provide for a sound, equitable and resilient economy that all Minnesotans can be proud of."**

"Clean energy jobs are critical to the success of Minnesota's economy," said Minnesota DEED Commissioner Steve Grove. **"And as we prioritize reopening and rebuilding our state's economy for the future, these jobs must be a part of the solution to ensure a resilient workforce, especially in Greater Minnesota."**



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The energy efficiency sector of the state's clean energy industry has been particularly hard hit by COVID-19, because access to buildings and building occupancy has changed so dramatically. Energy efficiency also makes up about three-quarters of the state's clean energy workforce. Deepinder Singh is the CEO of 75F, a smart building energy efficiency controls company out of Bloomington. He says his business has been severely impacted by COVID-19, but he remains hopeful.

"As a Minnesota start-up we have always thrived on innovation. We are channeling that creativity to create solutions that allow commercial buildings to be reopened safely while saving energy. In addition to implementing an epidemic mode that implements Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines we are collaborating with premier partners like the National Renewable Energy Laboratories to assess the energy impact of these measures. These are crucial initiatives to reopen the economy and get Americans back to work safely. I'm proud of our contributions to Minnesota's clean energy ecosystem," said Singh.

Ever-Green Energy works across sectors to advance and operate energy systems with a deep commitment to financial and environmental stewardship. The company specializes in developing and advancing thermal energy systems, with cutting-edge renewable thermal alternatives. It also operates and manages District Energy St. Paul, Energy Park Utility Company, Duluth Energy Systems and the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center Thermal operations. Nina Axelson serves as Ever-Green Energy's Vice President of Sustainability and Outreach and says the Clean Jobs Midwest Report illustrates how and why her organization is working to prevent the pandemic from slowing progress on decarbonizing the economy.

"We continue to be a strong partner in decarbonization, helping cities and businesses transition their energy systems to carbon-free alternatives. We are proud to have four infrastructure projects moving toward near-term carbon neutrality, and 12 total energy and utility projects working on decarbonization. These projects will support clean energy jobs and deliver much-needed environmental and economic value to their respective communities as they continue to weather the impacts of COVID-19," said Axelson.

Mortenson is a top-20 builder, developer, and engineering services provider serving the commercial, institutional, and energy sectors. The company headquartered in Golden Valley, Minnesota has been creating clean energy structures with a commitment to ingenuity and sustainability since 1995. The company has been a leading services provider on wind, solar and energy storage projects across the country.

"Renewable energy will continue to play a significant role in securing Minnesota's sustainable energy future. The demand for clean energy continues to grow and will provide quality jobs for workers both locally and across our country for years to come. We applaud the work of Clean Energy Economy Minnesota as the initiatives they support play a key role in facilitating growth in this vital space," said Trent Mostaert, Vice President and General Manager of Solar, Mortenson.

The Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) Minnesota & North Dakota based in St. Paul, Minnesota is an infrastructure union of 12,000 skilled construction and blue collar Laborers who contribute to building large utility wind, solar and transmission projects in the region.

"We have seen industry leaders take action to ensure that clean energy investments create high-quality jobs for Minnesota workers, and those efforts are paying off," said Kevin Pranis, Marketing Manager with LIUNA Minnesota and North Dakota. **"Wind farm construction projects put hundreds of local tradesmen and tradeswomen to work, boosting local economies in Greater Minnesota. We need new public and utility investments in clean energy now more than ever to stimulate our sputtering economy."**

The widespread layoffs in clean energy risk derailing what had been a thriving industry. Most at risk currently are small businesses that have been driving the recent years of growth and rural areas that increasingly benefit from clean energy opportunities. 71 percent of Minnesota’s clean energy workforce were employed by businesses with fewer than 20 employees while one in three clean energy jobs or 22,884 jobs were based in Greater Minnesota.

Compared to 2019 statewide workforce demographics, Minnesota’s clean energy industry was slightly more racially and ethnically diverse. However, the industry lagged Minnesota’s overall workforce in a few demographic areas. Females in particular made up 50 percent of Minnesota’s overall workforce, but only 27 percent of the state’s clean energy workforce. The Clean Jobs Midwest report does not provide wage data or race and gender breakdowns for manager-level and executive positions, though CEEM acknowledges that is important data for analyzing diversity, equity and inclusion.

CEEM is offering several policy recommendations that would help strengthen the industry. At the state policy level, lawmakers should:

- **Support the ECO Act:** Energy Conservation and Optimization or ECO is an expansion of the state’s Conservation Improvement Program. The legislation would provide new energy efficient options to businesses and residential customers, while also driving local job growth through technological innovation and the development of new utility programs.
- **Encourage technology and market-driven job creation:** Address policy and regulatory market barriers to investment in energy storage and energy efficiency for businesses, communities, and households. Support building efficiency measures: Buildings present an immediate opportunity for policymakers to support building owners in making targeted reductions in energy waste and harmful emissions.
- **Invest in system benefits and critical infrastructure:** Community resilience is enhanced through smart clean energy investments. Across the state, rural areas, energy cooperatives, and under-resourced communities face challenges related to critical infrastructure. Building clean energy in these communities spurs economic activity and improves community resilience.
- **Support workforce development:** Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the clean energy industry faced hiring challenges. We must ensure the state’s economic recovery includes a strong future workforce supported by registered apprenticeship, training and education programs.

Losses Eliminate Growth Across Key Sectors

| STATE CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Sector | Q4 2019 Employment | Unemployment Claims Since March |
| Energy Efficiency | 47,114 | 8,596 |
| Renewables | 7,920 | 1,575 |
| Clean Vehicles | 3,191 | 566 |
| Grid & Storage | 2,899 | 530 |
| Clean Fuels | 681 | 278 |
| TOTAL | 61,805 | 11,546 |

Other key findings:

- Minnesota's 47,114 energy efficiency workers are **nearly enough to fill the University of Minnesota's TCF Bank Stadium.**
- Construction (**59 percent**) and professional services (**12 percent**) make up the majority of clean energy jobs.
- Before the crisis hit, clean energy employers **projected 7 percent growth** in 2020 -- or adding more than 4,500 new jobs.
- **1 in 3** clean energy jobs is located in Greater Minnesota.
- The smart grid and energy storage sector experienced **5 percent growth** in 2019.
- Wind jobs grew nearly **6 percent** in 2019 as several new wind projects were completed and previously built projects were repowered.
- In 2019, Minnesota saw the **third largest** number of clean energy jobs gained in the 12-state Midwest region.

For interviews or video access with the quoted businesses, please contact:

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About Clean Energy Economy MN (CEEM): CEEM is an industry-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit representing the business case for clean energy in Minnesota. CEEM provides a unified voice for clean energy business across the state. Our mission is to provide educational leadership, collaboration, and policy analysis that accelerates clean energy market growth and smart energy policies. Learn more at www.cleanenergyeconomymn.org

About Clean Energy Trust (CET):

Clean Energy Trust provides catalytic capital and support to early-stage startups in the Mid-Continent region of the United States working on solutions for clean energy, decarbonization, and environmental sustainability. Based in Chicago, Clean Energy Trust invests in and provides hands-on support to help entrepreneurs scale and succeed. To date, Clean Energy Trust has helped its 33 portfolio companies raise \$26 of additional investment for every \$1 Clean Energy Trust has invested. Learn more at www.CleanEnergyTrust.org and follow us on Twitter at @cleanenergytrst

About Environmental Entrepreneurs (E2):

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.

The [2019 U.S. Energy and Employment Report](#) was 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 is available at www.usenergyjobs.org.