

SAFETY BULLETIN

Responding to an Emergency at a SOLAR GARDEN

Consumers Energy
Count on Us®

Spring 2016



CONSUMERS ENERGY is committed to working with public first responders to ensure the safety of our communities.

WHAT IS A SOLAR GARDEN? A Solar Garden is a large solar installation on the ground that produces solar energy for Consumers Energy electric customers. Consumers Energy will own, operate and maintain the Solar Gardens. A typical solar panel is a little smaller than a single bed – about 5 feet by 3 feet. The panels are manufactured by Suniva in Saginaw Township.

WHERE ARE THE SOLAR GARDENS LOCATED?

About 17 acres at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, and about 10 acres at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

When responding to any emergency involving a Consumers Energy solar garden, always contact us at **800-392-0015** so we can provide on scene support for safe resolution.

For more information, visit www.ConsumersEnergy.com/solargardens.

HOW TO RESPOND TO A STRUCTURE FIRE AT A SOLAR GARDEN

FIRE DEPARTMENT EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

- The photovoltaic (PV) array will always generate electricity during daylight, even when cloudy, raining, snowing, etc., and the generation of electricity cannot be turned off.
- Consider all PV equipment and wires to be energized, and do not touch or cut into or through PV modules, conduit or equipment.
- Do not open combiner box (square box, usually only on large commercial units). All energized wires from the solar panels are fed into the combiner box, then combined into two large high-current wires. Opening this box is dangerous. Boxes are normally locked.
- Photovoltaic panels in these Solar Gardens do not have a method for the fire service to discharge the dangerous amount of energy stored within them. Maintain a safe distance away and call Consumers Energy for assistance.

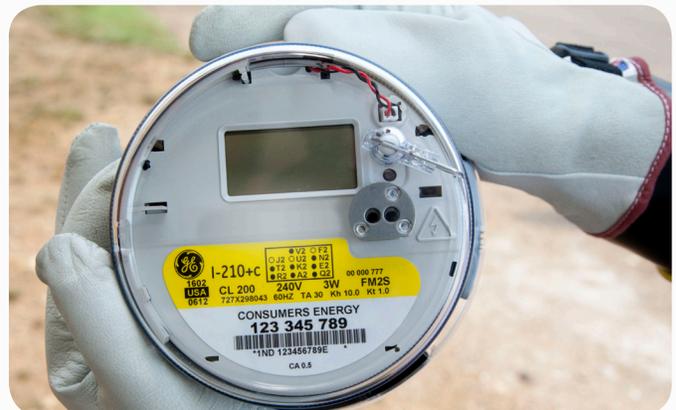
SAFETY HAZARDS

- **Electrical shock and burns** – Solar panels being energized from structure fire even if it is dark. Contact with electricity can cause a range of effects, from a slight tingling sensation because of involuntary muscle reaction to severe burns, and even death. Burns that may occur in

electrical incidents include electrical, arc and thermal. Arc temperatures can reach 15,000 to 35,000 degrees.

- **Ground hazards** – There may be uneven terrain where ground-mounted arrays are located. Use caution when approaching.

NOTE: When working near electrical circuits, keep in mind that, typically, hot sticks on many engines can detect only alternating current, and would not detect direct current in PV wiring or battery conductors. Please do not pull the electric meter to shut off power to a building.



DO NOT pull the electric meter to shut off power to a building.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR PUBLIC FIRST RESPONDERS

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Emergency Officials

First Responder Training

We provide in-person education sessions for emergency officials, such as police and fire departments, on natural gas or electric hazards and responding to utility-related emergencies. Contact our [Public Safety Outreach team](#) to request safety training and educational resources. [Find a Public Safety Outreach team member in your area.](#)

FIRST RESPONDER GUIDE: ELECTRIC EMERGENCIES

FIRST RESPONDER GUIDE: NATURAL GAS EMERGENCIES

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES. THAT'S OUR PROMISE TO MICHIGAN.

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- **Dedicated Public Safety Outreach team** that provides in-person education sessions for emergency officials on responding to utility related emergencies.
- **Password protected Emergency Officials portal** that provides access to our system maps (electric/gas), request training, access safety downloads and other resources.
- **First responder guides** that provide a quick reference for first responders on responding to electric and/or natural gas emergencies
- **If you have any additional questions** about this Safety Bulletin, would like to request access to the Emergency Officials portal, would like additional copies of our first responder guides or to request training for your department, please contact the Public Safety Team at publicsafety@cmsenergy.com or visit www.ConsumersEnergy.com/safety.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO!

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