

Facts about the Air Resources Board's Distributed Generation Certification and District Guidance Program

What is Distributed Generation?

Distributed Generation (DG) refers to electrical generation near the place of use. DG may or may not be connected to the electrical grid. The electricity can be generated by a variety of technologies—photovoltaics; wind; fuel cells; diesel, natural gas, and gasoline powered generators; and small turbines.

Does California have a DG program?

Yes. On September 25, 2000, California Governor Gray Davis signed Senate Bill (SB) 1298. SB 1298 requires that by January 1, 2003, all electrical generation technologies shall be certified by the Air Resources Board (ARB) or permitted by one of California's 35 local air pollution control districts (Districts).

What does SB 1298 require of the ARB?

SB 1298 requires the ARB to adopt a certification program and uniform emission standards for electrical generation technologies that are exempt from District permitting requirements. In addition, SB 1298 requires the ARB to issue guidance to the districts on the permitting or certification of electrical generation technologies under their regulatory jurisdiction. The ARB is required to meet the requirements of SB 1298 by January 1, 2003.

At what level does SB 1298 direct the ARB to adopt uniform emissions standards for DG technologies that are exempt from District permitting requirements?

SB 1298 requires that the uniform emission standards adopted by the ARB reflect the best performance achieved in practice by existing technologies that are exempt from District permitting requirements. In addition, SB 1298 requires that, by the earliest practicable date, these standards shall be made equivalent to the level that the ARB determines to be the best available control technology (BACT) for permitted central station power plants in California.

How will the uniform emissions standards be expressed?

SB 1298 requires that the emissions standards be expressed in pounds per megawatt hour.

Can the ARB charge fees to certify DG technologies?

SB 1298 allows the ARB to assess fees to those seeking certification as a distributed generator. The fees cannot exceed the reasonable costs of administering the program.

What are the requirements of SB 1298 with respect to DG technologies that fall under the Districts' regulatory jurisdiction?

The ARB is required to issue guidance to the Districts on the permitting or certification of electrical generation technologies under the districts' regulatory jurisdiction. In addressing BACT, the guidance shall, at the earliest practicable date, make it equivalent to the level determined by the ARB for permitted central station power plants. This guidance shall also address methods for streamlining the permitting and approval of electrical generation units, including the potential for precertification of one or more types of electrical generation technologies.

How will ARB go about adopting the certification program and uniform emission standards for DG technologies that are exempt from District jurisdiction?

Over the next year, the ARB staff will work with affected stakeholders to develop the proposed certification program and the proposed uniform emission standards. In November 2000, the ARB staff conducted a public consultation meeting to solicit initial input from stakeholders on the SB 1298 program. In addition, a stakeholder Work Group has been formed to assist the ARB staff in designing the proposed certification program and the emission standards. Additional meetings with individual stakeholders will be held upon request. Other staff with related programs within ARB will assist in the development of the proposal. Finally, the ARB staff will coordinate with other states, such as Texas, that are also developing air quality-related DG programs.

After an extensive solicitation of stakeholder input, the ARB staff will present the proposed standards and certification program to the ARB Board for consideration and adoption in late 2001 at a public hearing. After the hearing, the ARB staff plans to process certifications from manufacturers who have indicated intent to certify DG technologies.

What is the ARB's schedule for the adoption of guidelines for DG technologies that fall under the Districts' regulatory jurisdiction?

Using the same public process described above, the ARB staff intends to present the guidelines to the ARB Board for informational purposes in late 2001.

Who can I contact at the ARB for more information?

Please contact Ms. Kitty Martin at (916) 322-3907 or kmartin@arb.ca.gov or Mr. Grant Chin at (916) 327-5602 at gchin@arb.ca.gov.