With over one million residents and 200 managed facilities, Contra Costa has the largest population of the four counties MCE serves. Contra Costa County has been committed to energy conservation since the 2000s, being one of the first municipalities to participate in early demand response programs. Working with the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, the County participated in an auto demand reduction program, which detailed operating strategies to reduce energy use during peak hours of the day. This expertise carried forward to the summer of 2022 when Contra Costa County became a model for optimizing MCE’s Peak FLEXmarket program.

**Peak FLEXmarket Program**

**Season at a Glance**
- Participated in 9 demand response events during summer 2022
- Enrolled 20 of the highest energy consuming buildings

**Savings at a Glance**
- Saved over 7,500 kWh
- Earned over $15,000 in incentives from MCE and $3,000 in bill savings

“We were able to identify nearly two dozen buildings where slight changes to HVAC schedules could deliver significant grid benefits without compromising critical services. Aside from bill savings and grid benefits, participating in MCE’s Peak FLEXmarket program will compensate us — at a rate 4–5 times greater than retail value — for the electricity we would have otherwise used.” — Brendan Havenar-Daughton, Energy Manager
How It Worked

The key to Contra Costa County’s success was creating a working group to develop and implement load reducing measures. By coordinating with primary stakeholders including Department Directors, Facility Engineers, and HVAC Contractors, the County developed a clear strategy and expectations for what could be achieved with the summer season.

Contra Costa County’s strategy focused on modifying air conditioning schedules to bring A/C equipment online later and shut it down earlier in the day. The County leveraged an existing Building Management System (BMS) to accomplish this strategy, which enabled simple participation and reduced the impact on facility staff. The participation results varied by day and site according to the strategies implemented at each location.

Unexpected Outcomes

Contra Costa County is a model of stakeholders coming together to make significant impacts through relatively minimal changes in operations. By participating in MCE’s Peak FLEXmarket program, the County generated nearly $18,000 in benefits. Additionally, the County determined that the interventions had relatively no impact on the building occupants and will continue to operate the buildings under the new schedule, sustaining the building operations at a reduced cost and permanently reducing their base load.

For the upcoming summer, Contra Costa County intends to implement additional load reducing measures including:

» Precooling buildings earlier in the day and increasing the A/C set points to further reduce load.
» Exploring opportunities to offer employees the option to work from home or leave early to minimize the likelihood of discomfort.
» Turning off EV chargers strategically and responsibly.
» Reminding employees that small behaviors can make a big difference like turning off lights, monitors, and other equipment when not in use.

“Apart from the economic and environmental benefits of our actions, we are deeply grateful that enough market actors were able to reduce their usage to prevent rolling blackouts, which can lead to significant and tragic outcomes for society at large.”

— Brendan Havenar-Daughton, Energy Manager

Learn More | Visit mceCleanEnergy.org/peak-flexmarket
Contact us at info@mceCleanEnergy.org