



2019 Annual CASBO Conference: Energy Storage & Your School

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Why Energy Storage Stole the Show at CASBO 2019

when 1,200 school facility managers gathered in Sacramento for the 2019 CASBO conference, nobody expected battery technology to become the talk of the cafeteria. But as California's Public Utilities Commission rolled out new wildfire prevention measures that September, energy storage suddenly became schools' new best friend. I still remember the collective "aha!" moment when Santa Rosa School District revealed how their Tesla Powerpack installation kept lights on during 18 consecutive PSPS outages.

The 3-Pronged Value Proposition

Conference presenters hammered home why energy storage matters for K-12 institutions:

- ? Emergency preparedness that keeps STEM labs humming during blackouts
- ? Demand charge reduction averaging \$15k/month for mid-sized districts
- ? Meeting California's ambitious Carbon Neutral Initiative targets

Real-World Lessons From Early Adopters

San Diego Unified's energy manager put it bluntly: "We're not talking science projects here." Their 2.5MW/5MWh system paid for itself in 4 years through:

Strategy

Savings

Peak shaving

\$28k/month

Demand response

\$12k/event

The PG&E Factor

With the utility's new Remote Grid Program, rural schools like Trinity Alps Charter discovered they could ditch expensive power line upgrades. As one facilities director joked, "Our batteries now charge faster than

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students' smartphones during lunch break."

Navigating California's Regulatory Maze

The conference's most crowded session? "How to Untangle SGIP + ITC + Prop 39 Funding." Key takeaways:

- ? Time-of-use rate optimization requires different strategies than wildfire resilience
- ? Lithium-ion isn't the only option - flow batteries gained traction for vocational schools
- ? New Title 24 requirements make storage mandatory for certain retrofit projects

The Great V2X Debate

When Oakland Unified proposed using electric school buses as grid assets, the room divided faster than a middle school lunch table. "We're educators, not energy traders!" argued one skeptic. But the math won out - their pilot project demonstrated \$7k/month in vehicle-to-grid revenue.

Implementation Gotchas You Can't Afford to Miss

Multiple districts shared hard-won lessons:

- ? Storage sizing requires analyzing 15-minute interval data, not monthly bills
- ? Fire marshal approvals add 4-6 months to timeline
- ? Thermal management systems matter more than spec sheets suggest

As Los Angeles USD's project lead noted, "Our first installation nearly became a \$2 million paperweight because we didn't account for transformer limits." Ouch.

The Future-Proofing Playbook

Forward-thinking districts are already layering storage with:

- ? Solar carports that double as EV charging canopies
- ? AI-powered energy management systems
- ? Second-life batteries from decommissioned EVs

As the conference wrapped up, the consensus was clear: Energy storage isn't just about backup power anymore. It's becoming the Swiss Army knife of school infrastructure - part financial tool, part sustainability driver, part educational asset. And for facilities teams? Let's just say their job descriptions just got a whole lot more interesting.



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