

Solar “suitcase” lets Valley students experiment with clean power

By Tim Sheehan



Denny Boyles, a spokesman for Pacific Gas & Electric Co., demonstrates one of the portable “solar suitcase” kits that will be available to high school students to experiment with solar power.

TIM SHEEHAN — The Fresno Bee

One hundred portable “solar suitcases” capable of converting the sun’s power to run a light or charge a mobile device will be made available to high school students across Central and Northern California to experiment with creative ways the kits can be used in developing countries.

The kits are being made available through an application process by Pacific Gas & Electric Co. and nonprofit Green Tech. Denny Boyles, a PG&E spokesman in Fresno, said he hopes students in Fresno and the Valley will be

interested enough to apply for the program. Students who are chosen will be asked to create videos demonstrating local their projects and what they learned about clean energy. Four will have an opportunity to go on a humanitarian mission to Kenya with the international charity Free the Children to deliver solar suitcases to medical clinics, schools or orphanages.

“We like to focus on STEM education,” Boyles said, referring to science, technology, engineering and math fields.

The kits, which weigh between 20 and 25 pounds, include a small solar photovoltaic panel, a 12-volt battery, cables and a low-power LED light. Students or schools that are selected to receive a solar suitcase will be trained by Green Tech on how to assemble the kits and the basics of how solar power works.

“It’s a nifty idea,” Boyles said. “At its core, if you’re in a place where there’s no electricity, you can bring light where there is no light. ... And we’re hoping students can come up with lots of other things it can do.”

More information about the [solar suitcase program](#) and how to apply is available online at www.pge.com/solarsuitcase.

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