

Solar Series | What You Need to Know Before You Make the Switch



Considering converting your home or business to solar energy? Let's get started! Going solar is a great way to reduce your energy costs while decreasing your carbon footprint. Plus, when you generate extra energy, you'll earn credits that can lower your bill even more.

Once you've decided solar is right for you, this fact sheet can help you understand how to select the right contractor and solar panels, ensure your conversion goes smoothly, protect your rights as a consumer, and more.

Remember, with solar energy, your return on investment begins as soon as the sun comes up!

CHOOSE AN EXPERIENCED, LICENSED CONTRACTOR

A qualified contractor will analyze your past energy consumption and costs, your future energy needs and desired offset, as well as factors that will affect the performance of your solar system, including roof size, tilt and direction of the system and shading. You may even consider adding battery storage to enhance your system's performance. Here are some items to keep in mind:

- Contractors can provide you with a free home evaluation
- Check to make sure your contractor has an active A, B or C-10 license at [cslb.ca.gov](https://www.cslb.ca.gov)
- Choose a contractor with previous experience in your area; search by ZIP code and average costs per watt at [californiadgstats.ca.gov](https://www.californiadgstats.ca.gov)
- Ask for references from your neighbors and friends
- Expect the contractor to assess your usage and provide a financial plan
- SCE recommends obtaining at least 3 bids. SCE's Solar Marketplace also provides solar system cost comparisons and financing options: <https://marketplace.sce.com/solar/>

Make Your Property Energy-Efficient

Reducing your energy use before installing a solar system can save you thousands of dollars in upfront costs by not paying for a larger system than you may need. Here are some simple efficiency measures for you to start with:

- Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescents (CFLs) or light-emitting diodes (LEDs)
- Replace old, inefficient appliances with Energy Star[®] appliances
- Complete an energy-efficiency audit before choosing a contractor to install your solar energy system

Before You Sign With a Contractor...

- ✓ Be sure to review the California Solar Consumer Protection Guide: <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/solarguide/>
- ✓ Make sure you understand all details in the contract
- ✓ Know the terms of your warranties
- ✓ Understand details of all maintenance agreements
- ✓ Be aware of related costs for permits, electrical system upgrades and structural upgrades

Under California state law, you should never pay more than \$1,000, or 10% of the purchase price (whichever is less) for your down payment.

After You Sign the Contract, Your Contractor Will...

- ✓ Evaluate your energy needs and design your solar system accordingly
- ✓ Apply for interconnection and net energy metering (NEM) with SCE
- ✓ Apply for a building permit with the city or county
- ✓ Obtain the permit and install the system

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Selecting Solar Panels

Not all solar panels are alike. Consider which kind is right for your property. Read more about types of solar panels at gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov.

Crystalline Silicon

Generally the most cost-effective and energy-efficient, but more susceptible to the effects of shade and high temperatures.

Thin-Film

Relatively inexpensive, but not as cost-effective as crystalline silicon; they are less affected by shade and high temperatures.

Building Integrated Photovoltaic (BIPV)

Incorporated into roof tiles, windows or a building façade, they tend to produce less electricity, but can be more attractive.

Tips on Managing a Smooth Solar Conversion

Before Installation

You must have a building or electrical permit from your city or county building and safety department. You may also need approval from your homeowner's association.

During Installation

A typical residential installation takes 1 to 3 days with a minimum of two installers.

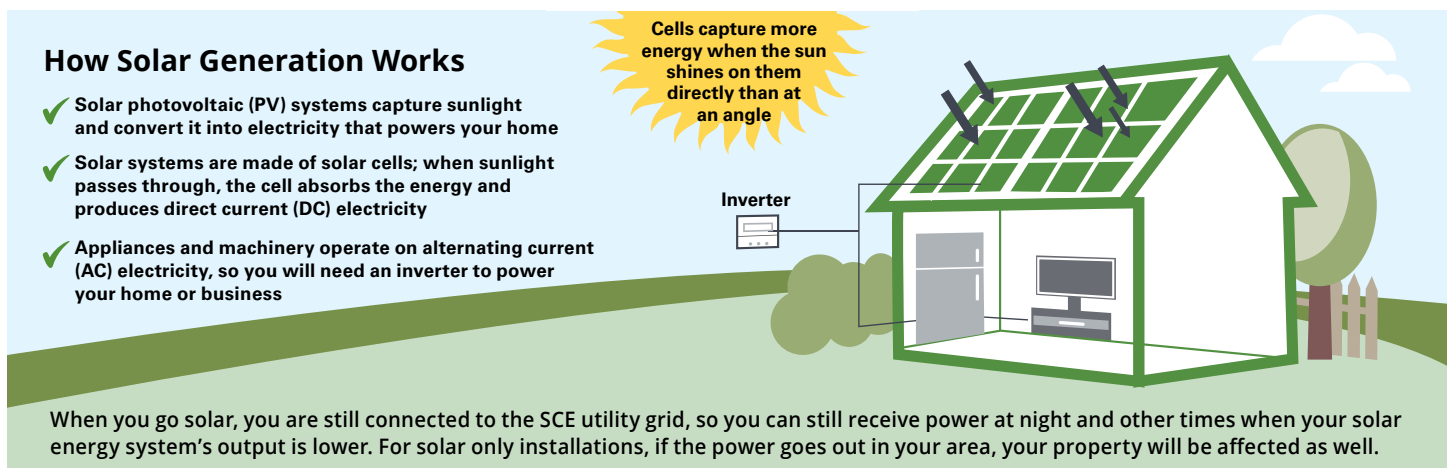
After Installation

The city or county will inspect your system. After it passes, we may also inspect it, so do not turn your system on until you receive official permission from your city or county and from SCE. To learn more, visit sce.com/gosolar.

Know Your Rights

Beware of marketers who may try to mislead you about their solar products and services. As a consumer, you have rights.

- The California Solar Consumer Protection Guide provides a detailed list of your rights and available resources to guide you in the solar process: <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/solarguide/>
- Common marketing scams include posing as a utility representative, making misleading promises of rebates and high-pressure sales tactics
- Your contractor needs your usage details to provide an assessment, but they do not need access to your personal information or access to your SCE account
- If you are providing your energy usage in order to obtain a quote on a solar generating system, you can visit sce.com/gosolar and review our Guide to Going Solar
- Compare contractors and rates; ask questions



How Solar Generation Works

- ✓ Solar photovoltaic (PV) systems capture sunlight and convert it into electricity that powers your home
- ✓ Solar systems are made of solar cells; when sunlight passes through, the cell absorbs the energy and produces direct current (DC) electricity
- ✓ Appliances and machinery operate on alternating current (AC) electricity, so you will need an inverter to power your home or business

Cells capture more energy when the sun shines on them directly than at an angle

Inverter

When you go solar, you are still connected to the SCE utility grid, so you can still receive power at night and other times when your solar energy system's output is lower. For solar only installations, if the power goes out in your area, your property will be affected as well.

Get solar energy working for you. Learn more at sce.com/gosolar.