

DCP & Going Solar

The Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection's mission is to make sure that consumers have the information they need to make informed decisions in today's market place. We're excited that so many people are choosing to go solar and committing to more efficient forms of energy. Solar does not replace your electric costs, but can make them much lower. The process for purchasing solar panels can be complicated, and involves interacting with a number of different professionals. With growing demand, competition among solar companies is intense, and you may feel like you're getting a lot of great offers. This guide is meant to provide consumers with questions to ask and information to seek in the process of going solar.

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Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection



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CONSUMER PROTECTION

Solar Panel Buyer's Guide

Your Solar Panel Process & Planning Tools

What to Research Before You Commit

- Get multiple quotes from licensed professionals before committing to a specific company, and keep in mind the cheapest option may not always be the best.
- Solar panel purchases are eligible for the Federal Investment Tax Credit (ITC). Check with a tax professional to find out how potential tax credits could affect your financing.
- Call your electric provider for your past rate information to see how much your rate has increased. Many solar panel companies will use a projected rate increase in their sales pitch. Checking with your electric provider can be a good way to double check those numbers.
- Before you make a final decision, ask for a projection of how much sunlight your panels should receive based on their proposed placement.
- If you have entered a lease or Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), be clear about the terms including what happens if you sell your home.

STEP 1 Find a Contractor

The person who provides you with a contract will be a registered Home Improvement Contractor, or salesperson through your solar company. Those with E-1 Unlimited Electrical Contractor or PV-1 Limited Solar Electric Contractor electrical licenses may also contract with you. **Ask any questions you might have before you sign your contract.** Home improvement contract requirements are available on DCP's website. You may cancel your contract any time before midnight the 3rd business day after a transaction. You may also visit www.GoSolarCT.com to view a list of contractors approved obtain incentives for you through the CT Green Bank.

STEP 2 Understand Your Financing

There are three main options for payment: buying, leasing, or financing. If you receive a tax credit, there may be specific terms to your financing. You may also wish to discuss the possibility of a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with your utility company. You will want to make sure you know who is doing your financing, and if the rate is fixed or variable. You should also know how your payments will be structured.

STEP 3 Solar Panel Placement & Permitting

Once you're ready to have your solar panels placed on your home, a few things will happen. An engineer will need to approve your plan, and might visit the site. Those who install your panels will likely be subcontractors of the company you're working with. Your local building inspector will make sure your plans are compliant with local building code, and you have the needed permits. Work **cannot** begin on your home until you have proper permits. Your building inspector may also serve as a resource for other questions you may have. This process may take several months.

STEP 4 Hook Up Your Electrical

Either one or two licensed electrical workers will set up your solar panel system after it is placed on your home. You must have an E-1 Unlimited Electrical Contractor. Their license allows them to connect your system into the power grid and electric panel, and connect your solar panels. You might also have a PV-1 Limited Solar Electric Contractor who can **only** connect your panels.

How to File a Complaint & Other Resources

- You can verify the license or registration of Electricians, Home Improvement Contractors, and Engineers at www.elicense.ct.gov.
- If you're considering going solar, reach out to the CT Green Bank at www.GoSolarCT.com.
- Be aware of scams. If an offer sounds too good to be true, or a salesperson is using pressure tactics, think twice before signing anything.
- If you have a complaint, you can contact the Department of Consumer Protection via email at dcp.frauds@ct.gov, or call Toll-Free at 800.842.2649.