



# Choosing the Right Contractor to Install Solar on Your Property

A qualified Solar Photovoltaic (PV) contractor is your key to getting the most productive solar energy system for your home or business. The installer can help you determine what type and size of solar power system is right for you and your building site. A qualified installer will also help guide you through the BWP solar rebate application process.

A solar salesperson may also offer you a number of options for financing and an estimate of your bill savings and payback time. Be advised that Burbank Water and Power has had electric rate increases that were significantly less than the rate of the consumer price index over the last ten years. This means you should be wary of solar sales tactics and payback calculations that may claim otherwise.

## Always Verify the Following Items With Your Contractor:

- Contractors must have a Burbank business license and appropriate contractor's license. The Burbank business license can be obtained when they apply for a building permit. The contractor's license must fall within the classifications listed below, these are the only licenses authorized to perform solar PV construction or installation. Those without any of these license classifications are NOT authorized to perform this type of work.
  - "A" – General Engineering contractors are authorized to install solar energy systems.
  - "B" – General Building contractors are authorized to install solar energy systems within the definition of B&P Code Section 7057, since a solar energy system constitutes the use of two unrelated building trades or crafts as required by Section 7057.
  - C-10 – Electrical contractors are authorized to perform any solar projects which generate, transmit, transform or utilize electrical energy in any form for any purpose.
  - C-46 – Solar contractors install, modify, maintain, and repair thermal and photovoltaic solar energy systems. A licensee in this classification shall not undertake or perform building or construction trades, crafts or skills, except when required to install a thermal or photovoltaic solar energy system.
- Contractor license information can be verified through the State of California at [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov).
- It is highly recommended that you get three bids from qualified installers and ask for local references.
- BWP does not certify or recommend PV equipment manufacturers or installers; however, these clickable internet resources can help you locate PV installers:
  - California Energy Commission: <http://www.gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov/database/search-new.php>
  - California Solar Energy Industries Association: <http://calseia.org/>
- In addition, the independent League of California Homeowners operates a contractor approval system that is free to the public. Contractors apply and provide proof of licenses and insurance, which the League verifies monthly. They also investigate for previous complaints, etc. The League can be contacted at (800) 692-HOME or at their website [www.homeowners.org](http://www.homeowners.org) and click on "Find a Contractor." Look under the specialty of "Solar Energy."

# Questions to Ask Your Solar Installer

Finding the right Solar Contractor can be daunting. To help with this task, we've created a list of important questions you should ask a solar installer.

## **PART 1: Questions to Ask When You're Shopping for a Solar Contractor**

Use the questions below to help you decide if a contractor is right for you:

- 1. How much money is due up-front?
- 2. Which rebates and incentives am I eligible for?
- 3. If my energy use changes (i.e. I buy an electric car) can I add more panels later?
- 4. When would I receive the Federal solar tax credit? How much is it?
- 5. What will happen with local and state rebates? Will they increase over time?
- 6. Should I wait for newer technology?
- 7. When was your company established and how much solar has it installed to date?
- 8. Does your company hire sub-contractors when it gets busy?
- 9. How long will installation take?
- 10. Do I need to be here for the installation?

***Be sure to ask the following questions about how a solar installation will impact your roof:***

- 1. Do I need a new roof for an installation?
  - 2. Will the age or type of my roof affect the cost of installation?
  - 3. How will installation affect my roof? Will it create leaks? What if it does?
  - 4. If I'm planning on re-doing my roof, should I install panels before or after?
  - 5. Who will be working on my roof? How much experience do they personally have installing solar?
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## **PART 2: Important Billing Questions to Ask Your Solar Contractor**

Ask your contractor these important questions on how solar will affect your bill and your household expenses.

- 1. How much of my energy usage would my solar system cover?
- 2. How much would my monthly energy bills be after installation?
- 3. How long would my payback period be on my solar system?
- 4. How will billing work with my utility?
- 5. How will solar affect my homeowner's insurance?
- 6. What warranties are available on my panels? On your workmanship and the installation itself?