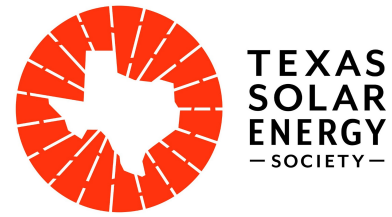


Choosing an Installer: 10 Things to Know



If you're looking to install solar onto your home/business but feel overwhelmed at the number of installer options available to you, TXSES is here to help. We've put together a list of the top ten factors to consider when making the decision on which installer to go with.

1. **Use a certified or accredited installer** – The [North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners](#) is one of the primary organizations tasked with issuing accreditation to solar installation businesses. In Texas, installers must be licensed through the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation and be performed by licensed electricians.
2. **Use a member or business of a trusted industry group** – Groups like the Texas Solar Energy Society and the Solar Energy Industries Association have their own vetting processes for ensuring the ethical operation and standard of service for installers. Industry groups represent a good first step to find some installers, and TXSES even offers a map of installers by county.
3. **Use an experienced installer** – The [DOE](#) recommends installers have a minimum of three years' experience. They should be able to answer any and all questions about solar that you have (how is installation performed, what panels are used, what is the generation capacity of the panels, etc.).
4. **Check reviews and referrals** – Personal networks and online reviews are excellent sources of weeding through installers. Personal connections may be able to give you insight into the quality of previous jobs, and online resources can help identify suspicious business practices.
5. **Compare quotes and cost estimates** – The [DOE](#) recommends using Berkeley Lab's [Tracking the Sun](#) tool to get a rough estimate of the cost of solar installations, and a reasonable bid before contacting installers. You should compare at least two bids across multiple installers to get a reliable estimate. Additionally, your installer should be able to explain the source of each cost within the offer, and inform you of any legitimate tax credits or installation incentives available.

6. **Clarify corporate chain-of-command** – The installer should disclose whether they do the work in-house or subcontract out. If the installer subcontracts, get information on the subcontractor, their experience, accreditation, etc.
7. **Ensure conduction of roof-check** – The installer should perform an analysis of the roof conditions before proceeding with installation. Make sure that they do so, and whether or not they recommend roof repairs or roof adjustments and options available.
8. **Ensure solar is the installers area-of-expertise** – Just because a business does installation doesn't mean it's their bread and butter. Choosing a business that focuses on installation is almost a surefire way of ensuring the quality of the job is met.
9. **Verify whether warranties or legal assurances exist** – Installers should be transparent about performance and equipment warranties on the system. The [Renewable Energy Design Group](#) recommends 90% production over 10 years and 80% over 25 for performance warranties, and 10-12 years for equipment warranties.
10. **Verify that the installer is a legitimate business** – Unfortunately, solar scams are all too common, but we recommend checking with your local utility provider, and the Better Business Bureau's [Scam Tracker](#) as two options to ensure the installers you're looking at are not underhanded.

Additional resources:

- [Austin Energy – Avoid Solar PV Scams](#)
- [Better Business Bureau – “Free Solar Panels” Can Cost You Big Time! How to Spot a Phony Offer and Find a Trustworthy Business](#)
- [U.S. Department of Energy – Decisions, Decisions: Choosing the Right Solar Installer](#)
- [NABCEP – Certification](#)
- [Renewable Energy Design Group – How to Choose a Solar Installer: 10 Things to Look For](#)
- [SEIA Member Directory](#)
- [TXSES Business Members by Location](#)
- [Texas Department of Licensing & Regulation – Solar Panel Consumer Protection](#)
- [Berkeley Lab – Tracking the Sun](#)

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