Solar Energy System Installation Permitting Checklist

The City of Alexandria welcomes residents, business owners, and nonprofits to pursue a solar energy installation. The pre-submittal Checklist below contains important information about the sequential steps that are required at a minimum for system installation. The intent of the Checklist is to expedite the plan review process, so you can start producing clean energy faster!

General Permitting, Installation, and Inspection Checklist

- ☐ Installer must have proper state licensing whether for building, electrical, and plumbing (as relevant for solar thermal). Master and contractor licenses and proof of insurance are needed to pull a permit.
- ☐ Installer first submits a building permit through the Online Permit Center, then provides Project Plan documents, and finally completes an electrical permit through the online portal. All applicable permitting fees will be charged at this time.
- ☐ Installer completes Sections 1 – 4 on the form Net Metering Interconnection Notification (Form NMIN) and submits to Dominion Energy (DE)*.
- ☐ The City issues permits after successful Project Plan review. The status of one's permit can be checked here. (Note: system cannot be installed at this point).
- ☐ Dominion reviews Form NMIN and sends approval to the installer. **With both City permits and Dominion approval in hand, the Installer may install the solar system.**
- ☐ After installation, Installer resubmits Form NMIN with Section 5 complete to Dominion.
- ☐ The Installer calls the city's automated inspection hotline, ACCESS, to schedule final inspection(s).
- ☐ The City completes inspection(s) and informs Dominion of successful completion.
- ☐ Dominion schedules a time to install a new meter and sends the Installer the Permission to Operate (PTO) letter for Customer signature.
- ☐ Installer resubmits the PTO letter with Customer signature to Dominion and turns on the Customer's solar energy system.
- ☐ Customer generates electricity, saves money, and reduces their carbon footprint!

Frequently Asked Questions

Can you elaborate on the City's permitting process and how to use the Online Permitting Center?

- The City of Alexandria's Online Permit Center offers Installers an easy way to submit applications for solar energy system installation. Installers begin by setting up an account with a username, password, and valid email address.
- Once an account is created, complete the building permit form.
    - For the project description please provide details on system size (kW), number of panels, number of arrays, panel model, inverter model and type (i.e. micro or string), roof mount or ground mount, and other relevant information.
    - Where asked, a solar installation is considered an Alteration.
    - Building area altered is the area covered by the solar system. This value is used to calculate permit fees.
    - Please provide the total system cost (including materials, labor, balance of system, acquisition, overhead, and margin) in the Cost/Fees section.
- After submitting the building permit application, you will receive an email from a Department of Code Administration Permit Technician requesting system drawings, including electrical.
    - Please make sure to include manufacturer specifications, mounting system details, structural analysis, system kilowatt rating (include AC and DC rating and number of arrays), single line diagram and labelling (per 2014 NEC), grounding details, and wiring method.
    - Installers may choose to use guidance provided by the Solar American Board for Codes and Standards for permit review of small-scale PV systems (i.e., less than or equal to 25 kW). These guidelines provide a description of the basic system requirements for building and electrical permits and include optional, interactive PDF forms and diagrams that they can be filled out electronically, scanned, and submitted to the City. The interactive PDF format helps Installers supply City staff with standardized and legible information for faster, easier review.
- Once the building permit application is approved, you will be asked to return to the Online Permit Center and fill out an electrical permit application. Please remember to provide the permit number of your approved building permit.
- Throughout this process, if you receive questions or comments from City staff, please provide a narrative when resubmitting documents on how these have been addressed. Your responses greatly help speed up the process.

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How long does it take to obtain a permit?

- The short answer: "it depends". On average, it takes approximately five (5) business days for projects less than or equal to 25 kilowatts (kW), ten (10) business days for projects greater than 25 kW and up to 500 kW, and fifteen (15) business days for non-residential projects up to one (1) megawatt (MW).

How much do permits cost?

- Please refer to Building Code Fee Schedule for up-to-date rates.

Are there any City tax exemptions available?

- The City offers the "Solar Energy Equipment Tax Exemption" valued at the total installation cost (i.e. materials and labor). There is no cost to apply for the tax exemption and the application form can be found here.

What about solar projects for properties located in a historic district?

- See Design Guidelines (Chapter 2, Building Alterations, Solar Collectors, pages 115-117) or contact the City's Department of Planning & Zoning by calling 703.746.4666.

How do I schedule an appointment for inspection?

- The City offers an automated inspection service called ACCESS. To schedule an inspection, call 703.746.4560. If ACCESS is unavailable, please call 703.746.4200 for assistance during regular business hours. For more information on the Inspection Request System click here.
- You can schedule an inspection up to seven (7) business days in advance. On the day of the inspection, please call the inspector assigned to you to determine a time of arrival.
- An inspection typically takes one hour to complete but will depend on the complexity of the system.

How many inspections does the City require?

- The short answer: "it depends". Typically, the City only requires one (1) inspection for small PV systems less than or equal to 25 kilowatts (kW), if wiring is not concealed. However, if wiring will be concealed, then two inspections are required. For larger or more complex systems, more inspections may be required. For more information, please call 703.746.4200 for assistance during regular business hours.

For more information, contact the City of Alexandria's Permit Center at 703.746.HELP (4357).

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