

# Solar Consumer Protection Resources

Solar Consumer Protection Workshop

May 17, 2018



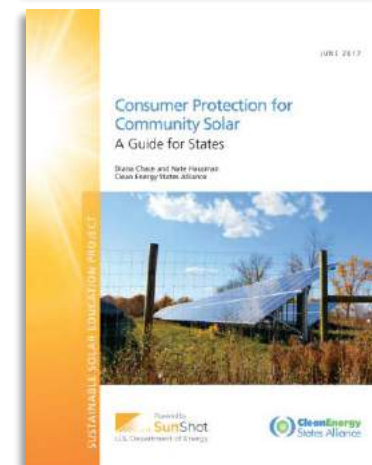
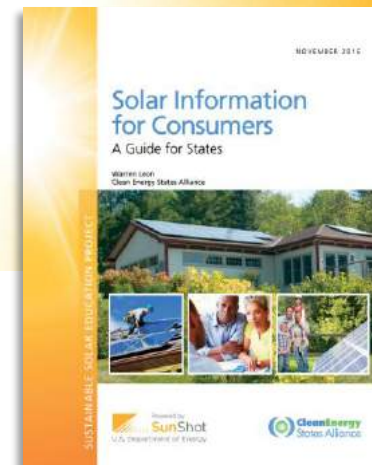
**SOLAR ENERGY**  
TECHNOLOGIES OFFICE  
U.S. Department Of Energy



**CleanEnergy**  
States Alliance

# CESA's Sustainable Solar Education Project Guides

- [Solar Information for Consumers: A Guide for States](#)
- [Standards and Regulations for Solar Equipment, Installation, and Licensing & Certification: A Guide for States and Municipalities](#)
- [Consumer Protections for Community Solar: A Guide for States](#)



# Solar Consumer Education Video

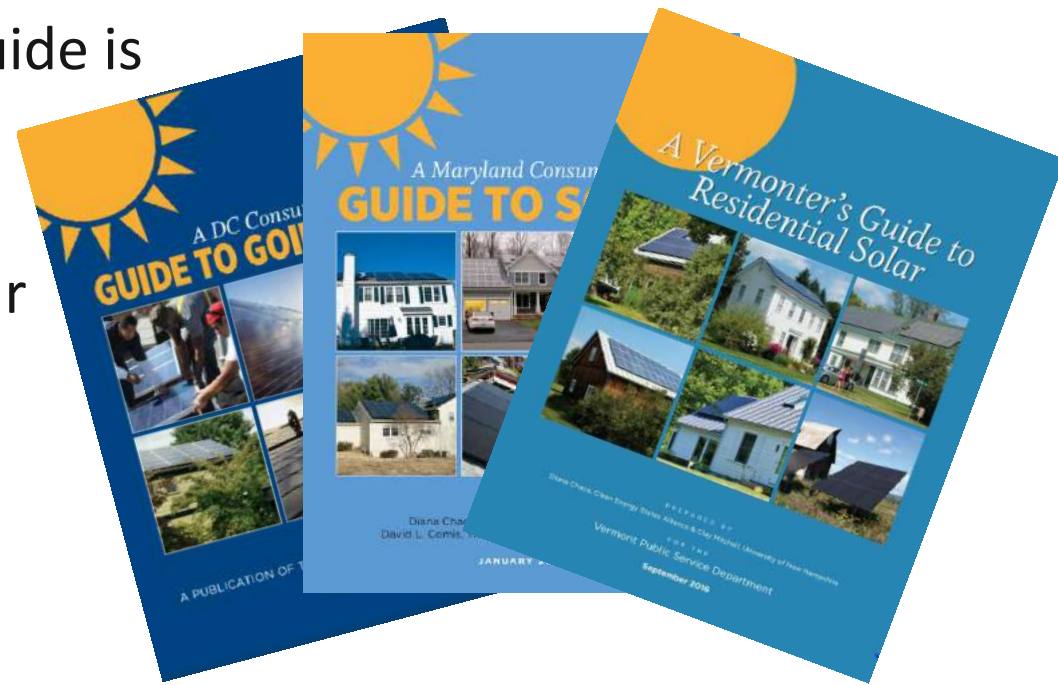
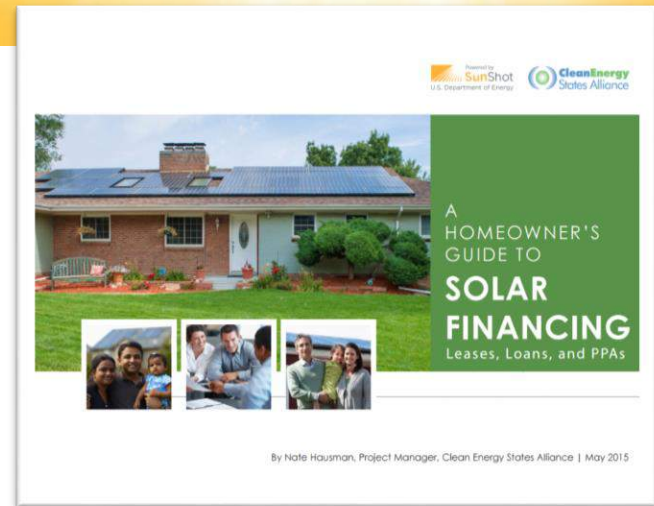
CESA, in conjunction with the George Washington University Solar Institute, released three short videos for solar consumers. States are encouraged to use them as resources on their websites.

- Rooftop Solar Financing 101
- Choosing a Solar Installer
- Will Solar Panels Save You Money?



# Other CESA Solar Guides

- CESA published *A Homeowner's Guide to Solar Financing – Leases, Loans, and PPAs*
  - Several state-specific versions of the guide have been produced
  - A Spanish version of the guide is also available
- State-specific residential solar guides



# Examples of State Materials

**SOLAR CONSUMER PROTECTION**

**COMMERCE DEPARTMENT**  
DIVISION OF ENERGY RESOURCES

## Going solar? Tips for hiring a qualified installer

Once you have decided to install a solar energy system—whether you're adding your home or business energy efficient and you've done your solar research—you will need to select a solar installer and plan the installation. The Minnesota Department of Commerce highly recommends the consumer take their time and exercise due diligence when hiring a qualified solar installer. Before proper installation requires many considerations and expertise to detail to ensure a safe, production, and long-lasting system. It's a good idea to interview and get bids from at least two or three installers before settling on one. The complexities of wiring, string, packaging, mounting, permitting, and interconnecting a solar electric system are beyond the scope of what most homeowners are able to do.

### Verify installer qualifications

Ultimately, you will decide on an installer who you trust. Even so, you should verify your installer's qualifications. The installation of all electrical wiring and electrical equipment, must be performed by a licensed electrical contractor, and is licensed or registered employees. Make sure the installer and the licensed electrical contractor are in good standing with the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI). To verify the status of license, go to the DLI license lookup tool ([dlivm.gov](http://dlivm.gov)) or call DLI at 651-224-2926. Other good contract material include:

- All about installers underneath. For example, the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) requires the NABCEP-certified solar PV installer receive training before being certified and that they receive ongoing training to maintain certification.
- Request references. Ask references to ask about their experience with the installer. Did the installer meet their expectations? Have they had any issues with permitting and interconnection. Did the installer work hard to resolve them with the utility and permit officials?
- Check the Better Business Bureau (BBB.org) to see if there are complaints or awards filed against the installer.
- Check a current list of installers. Lists are available from Clean Energy Resource Teams' (CERT) Clean Energy Project Directory, Minnesota Solar Energy Industries Association's Find an Installer, or the Commerce Department's Minnesota Solar Guide.

*Ultimately, you will decide on an installer that you trust. Even so, you should verify your installer's qualifications.*

**UCO's Consumer Guide to Rooftop Solar Photovoltaic (PV)**

**gosolarCT**

## So you're thinking of going solar

You're in the right place. Our goal is to give you the information you need to make a decision that's right for you, your home and your financial situation.

### Identifying The 4 Key Steps in Your Solar Journey

- 1 Get into Solar**  
Understand the specifics of what's involved in making solar work for your home.
- 2 Savvy Solar Shopper**  
Select a qualified contractor and understand your financing options.

**GO solar CALIFORNIA**

NEWSLETTER:  EMAIL ADDRESS:  FUTURE:  SEARCH:

About | Consumers | Professionals | Equipment | Resources | Solar Basics | News & Media | Contacts

## Pricing PV Systems and Financing Ideas

The cost of a PV system depends on the system size, equipment options (panels and inverters), permitting costs, and labor costs. Prices vary depending on other factors as well, such as whether your home is new, where the system is installed on your premise, the PV manufacturer, and other factors.

For example, the total average cost of an installed residential PV system under the California Solar Initiative is \$8.70 per watt (including installation, as of January 2012), that translates to about \$2,400 for a four-kilowatt system, the average size of a residential installation. To see real average cost data for solar projects installed near you, visit [www.solarcost.com](http://www.solarcost.com).

**How Solar Works**

- History of Solar Energy
- Energy Efficiency First
- Interconnection
- Net Energy Metering
- Questions & Answers
- Solar and Fire Safety
- Solar Pricing and Financing
- Solar Rights
- Tax Credits

**WILLIAM B. NORDELL**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

**SUSANNE R. YOUNG**  
DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

**WILLIAM F. GRIFFIN**  
CHIEF AND ASSISTANT GENERAL

**STATE OF VERMONT**  
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
109 STATE STREET  
MONTPELIER  
05602-1001

TEL: (802) 241-2171  
FAX: (802) 424-2154  
TTY: (802) 424-2665  
CIVIL RIGHTS: (802) 241-2627  
WEB PAGE: [www.ago.vermont.gov](http://www.ago.vermont.gov)

### Guidance for Third-Party Solar Projects

The Vermont Attorney General's Office and Department of Public Service issue the following guidance to all solar companies doing business in Vermont. The purpose of this guidance is to clarify the statements that a solar provider may make about the renewable nature of solar projects in which the Renewable Energy Certificates are retained and sold by the solar provider. **This guidance does not address solar projects that either the REC's or transfer ownership of the REC's directly to the consumer or Vermont utility.**

**NY-Sun**

Solar for Your Home | Solar for Your Business | Communities & Local Governments | Contractors | Data & Trends

## How to Go Solar

NY-Sun has the experience and expertise to help you make the switch to solar. We offer:

- Find a Contractor
- Solar Options
- Reading Your Electricity Bill
- Paying for Solar
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Community Solar

**CLEAN ENERGY RESOURCE TEAMS**

## WHAT IS A COMMUNITY SOLAR GARDEN

Community Solar Gardens are centrally located solar photovoltaic (PV) systems that produce electricity for participating subscribers. Xcel Energy customers can participate in projects offered by private developers. Members of other utilities in Minnesota can subscribe to a community solar garden if one is offered by the utility.

**EnergyTrust of Oregon**

RESIDENTIAL | COMMERCIAL | INDUSTRY + AGRICULTURE | RENEWABLE ENERGY

Find a Trade Ally Contractor - Residential

## Find a Solar Trade Ally Contractor

Thousands of households, retailers, business owners and municipalities have turned to the sun to save money on their energy bills. Like the resources below, find out if solar is right for you. If you are considering a community solar option, please visit [www.oregon.gov/energy/energy/CommunitySolar](http://www.oregon.gov/energy/energy/CommunitySolar) for more information.

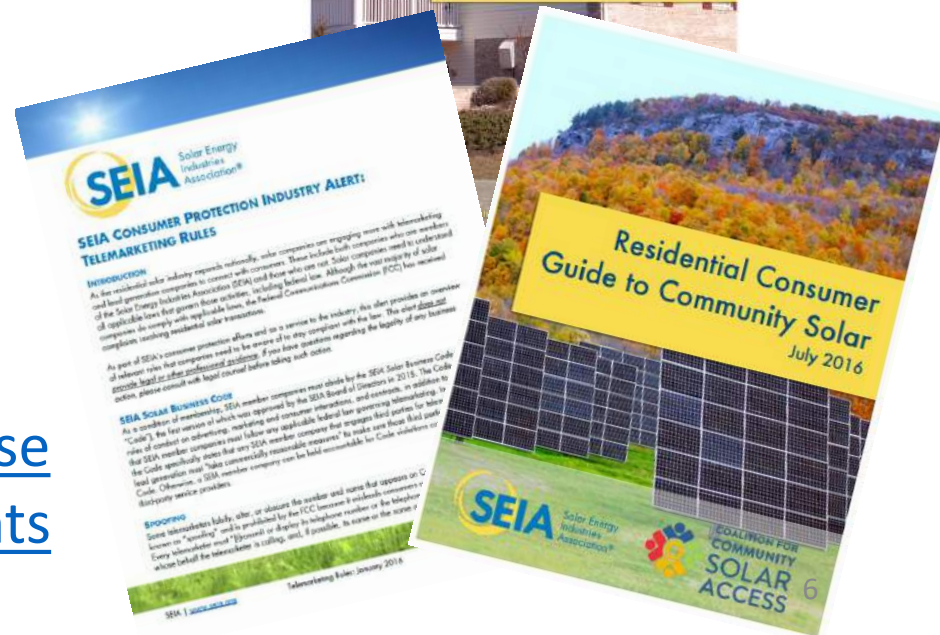
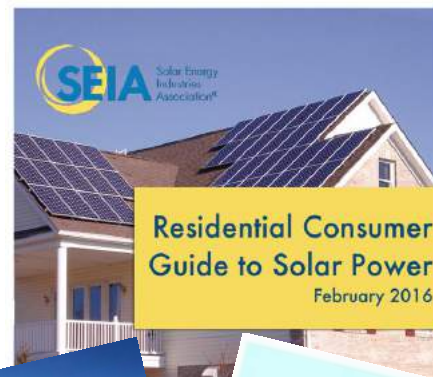
WHAT IT WORKS

- How It Works
- Financing Options
- Business and Projects
- Find an Installer
- Learn and Share More
- Property Assessment Checklist

# Industry Efforts to Address Solar Consumer Protection

The Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) has a [Solar Consumer Protection Resource Portal](#) with various resources:

- [Consumer Guide to Solar Power](#)
- [Residential Consumer Guide to Community Solar](#)
- [SEIA Solar Business Code](#) and [Complaint Resolution Process](#)
- [Information Alert on Telemarketing Rules](#)
- [Solar Leasing and Power Purchase Agreement Disclosure Statements](#)



# Solar Access to Public Capital Resources

The Solar Access to Public Capital working group led by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory has developed resources geared toward solar third-party owner providers:

- [Best Practices in PV Systems Installation](#)
- [Best Practices in PV Systems Operations and Maintenance](#)
- [Sample Leases and Power Purchase Agreements](#)

# *Consumer Reports* Resources

- [Shedding Light on Solar Power](#)
- [The Real Cost of Leasing vs. Buying Solar Panels](#)
- [How to Install a Solar System and Not Get Burned](#)





# Center for Resource Solutions Resources

- [Guidelines for Renewable Energy Claims: Guidance for Consumers and Electricity Providers](#)
- A short video titled “[What Is a Renewable Energy Certificate?](#)”
- [Guidance on the Legal Basis for Renewable Energy Certificates](#)
- [Best Practices in Public Claims for Solar Photovoltaic Systems](#)
- [Best Practices for Marketing Community Solar Programs](#)



CRS

center for  
resource  
solutions

# U.S. EPA Green Power Partnership



EPA's Green Power Partnership has a [webpage](#) dedicated to Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs):

- [Short video on roles of RECs in making green power possible](#)
- [Guidance on REC Arbitrage](#)
- [Guidance on the difference between offsets and RECs](#)



# Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) Resources

- [Be Smart Residential Solar Consumer Solar Checklist](#)
- [Clean Energy Consumer Bill of Rights](#)
- [Clean Energy Credentialing Program](#)



# Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Activity

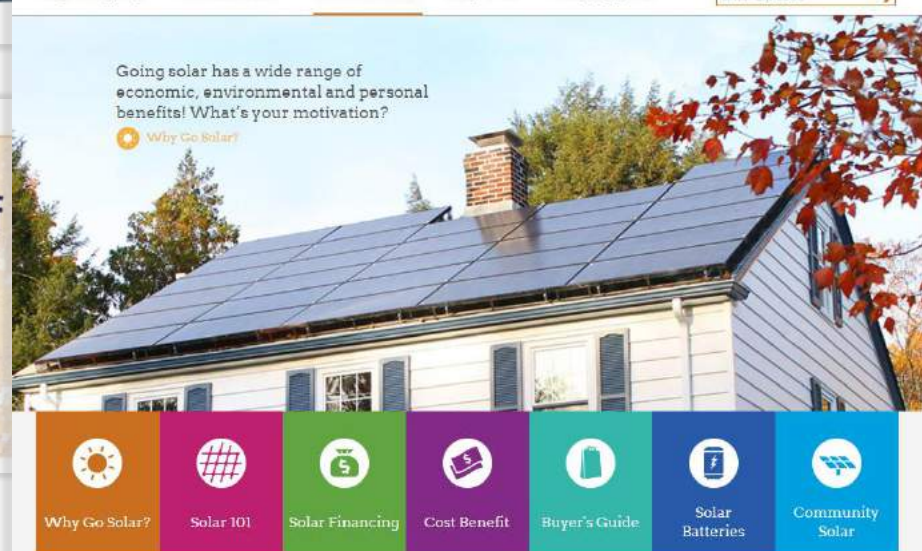
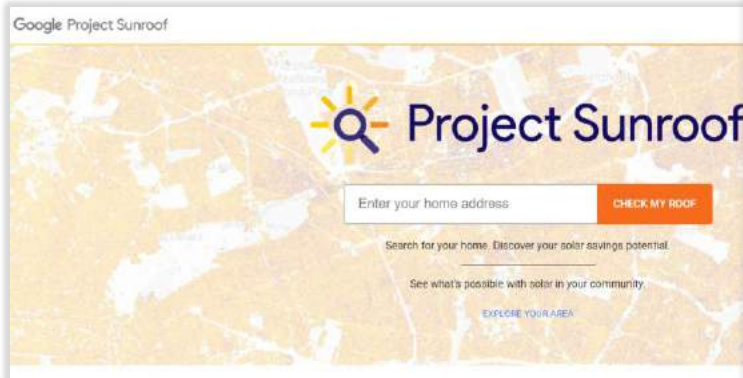
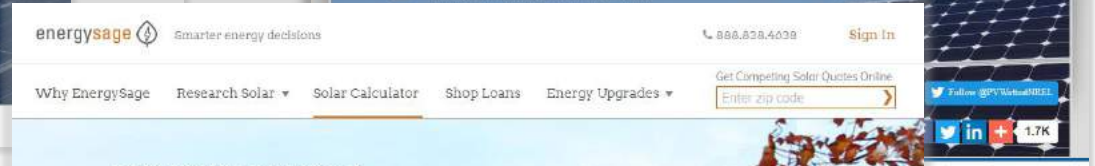
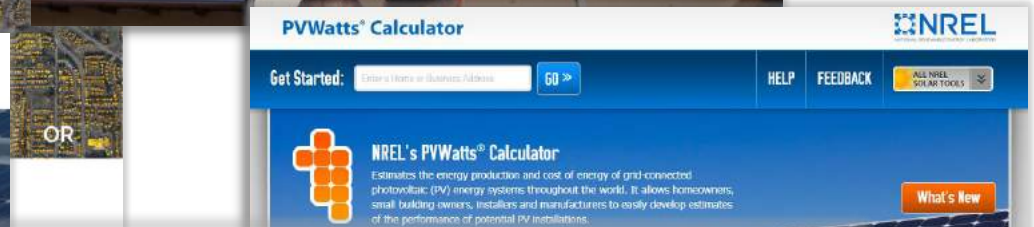
- In 2016, the FTC conducted a full-day workshop on competition and consumer protection issues titled [“Something New Under the Sun”](#)



**FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION**  
PROTECTING AMERICA'S CONSUMERS

- The FTC has produced [“Green Guides”](#) that provide guidance on environmental marketing claims including renewable energy claims.
- The FTC has taken action on solar robo-calls. For example, in 2016, the [FTC filed suit against KFJ Marketing](#) for violations of the telemarketing sales rule related to robo-calls designed to induce solar purchases.

# Other Web-Based Tools



# Thank You

Nate Hausman  
Project Director, CESA  
(802) 223-2554 x206  
[nate@cleanegroup.org](mailto:nate@cleanegroup.org)

<https://www.cesa.org/projects/sustainable-solar/>



**SOLAR ENERGY**  
TECHNOLOGIES OFFICE  
U.S. Department Of Energy



**CleanEnergy**  
States Alliance