



Selecting a Solar Company: Green and Red Flags

Adding solar to your home is exciting and it can be overwhelming to find the option that is best for you. This handout is designed to help you understand what to look for as you talk to solar companies, how to use Disclosure Forms to compare specific offers, and finally, how to select a solar company to contract with. Additional resources are available at www.IllinoisShines.com

Green Flags

-  The solar company is registered with Illinois Shines as an [Approved Vendor](#) or [Designee](#).
-  The solar company presents a **standard Disclosure Form**, reviews it with you, and answers your questions clearly and in an understandable way prior to contract signing.
-  The solar company **provides references** from previous customers upon request.
-  The solar company's **claims are factual and verifiable**. If they make claims about saving money, they can provide supporting documentation.
-  The solar company **speaks knowledgeably** about relevant electric utility policies, including net metering, and explains that you will still have a utility bill after going solar.
-  You are **allowed time** to review and fully understand the offer.

Red Flags

-  The solar company **misrepresents or suggests affiliation** with a utility, the state, or a government agency or program.
-  You are **not provided the opportunity to ask questions** before signing the Disclosure Form or contract.
-  The solar company has a history of **Program complaints, violations, or disciplinary action**.
-  The solar company promises **free solar panels**, claims that the **government is paying for the solar**, or makes other claims of free products and services.
-  The solar company claims you can **“eliminate your utility bill.”**
-  The solar company uses **high-pressure sales tactics** or urges you to sign a contract before understanding and considering your options.

Key Terms

- **Illinois Shines** is a state-administered incentive program designed to support customers ready to “go solar,” offering resources to help you select the solar options best for you, valuable consumer protections, and more.
- **Approved Vendors ("AVs")** are solar developers approved to submit solar projects to Illinois Shines and sell Renewable Energy Credits (“RECs”) generated by projects to the utility. Approved Vendors may use **Designees** to help with sales, installation, and maintenance.
- **Disclosure Forms** are required by Illinois Shines and designed to provide you clear and consistent information about solar project proposals, including project size, cost and fees, operations, and warranties. Disclosure Forms make it easy to compare offers from different Approved Vendors and Designees.

Best Practices for Selecting a Solar Company and Solar Installation Offer

Going solar is a big commitment, so as with other major consumer decisions, it’s wise to explore all available options. Below are some helpful tips for you to consider:

- **Do your research.** Conduct your own research by reading online customer reviews and asking for references. Consult the Illinois Shines Program Violations Report and Consumer Complaint Report to see if the solar company has been suspended, received a recent warning letter, or has received complaints. Both are available at <https://illinoisshines.com/violations-report-cp-complaint-report/>.
- **Request and compare at least three estimates.** Take advantage of the Disclosure Form, required by Illinois Shines. Use the "Deep Dive" tool to better understand Disclosure Form details, available at <https://illinoisshines.com/disclosure-forms/>.
- **Ask questions.** Most questions can be answered by the solar company or sales agent, and the Illinois Shines website also provides resources, key considerations, and questions to ask solar companies at <https://illinoisshines.com/exploring-panels-with-dg/>.

For additional questions about Illinois Shines, please contact the Program Administrator at admin@illinoisshines.com or 877-783-1820.

Consumer Protection Education and Resources

Illinois Shines maintains consumer protection requirements for solar projects and works diligently to ensure solar companies abide by all Program requirements. Illinois Shines consumer protection efforts not only protect consumers from harmful business practices, but also educate and empower consumers to make well-informed decisions about going solar.

The Consumer Protection team can support you throughout your solar project journey. To learn more about consumer protection resources, please visit <https://illinoisshines.com/consumer-protection-support/>.

Complaints

Consumers who encounter “red flag” situations or have other concerns are encouraged to file a complaint by:

- Using the webform at the Consumer Complaint Center (<https://illinoisshines.com/consumer-complaint-center/>),
- Emailing complaints@illinoisshines.com, or
- Calling 1-877-708-3456



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