

# Solar America Board for Codes and Standards



## EXPEDITED PERMIT PROCESS FOR PV SYSTEMS

A Standardized Process for the Review of  
Small-Scale PV Systems

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## Expedited Permit Process for PV Systems A Standardized Process for the Review of Small-Scale PV Systems

### Study Report Overview

This fact sheet summarizes the findings and recommendations of a new study report from the Solar America Board for Codes and Standards (Solar ABCs), *Expedited Permit Process for PV Systems – A Standardized Process for the Review of Small-Scale PV Systems*. The permit process presented in this report was created to meet the needs of the growing, small-scale photovoltaic (PV) market in the U.S. and is applicable nationwide. It takes advantage of the many common characteristics inherent in most of the small-scale PV systems installed today to streamline both the application and award of permits.

This study report describes a process that has advantages throughout the permitting cycle. Use of this process simplifies the technical requirements for PV contractors submitting the application for construction of a new PV system while also facilitating the efficient review of the application's electrical and structural content by the local jurisdiction awarding the permit.

### Key Findings

Local jurisdictions are responsible for establishing the permitting requirements for new PV system construction and installation in their territory. While jurisdictions everywhere share most of the same challenges in ensuring the safety of new PV systems, inexperience with PV has led many to implement unnecessarily complex and inconsistent permitting procedures. In these cases, barriers of time and expense brought about by requiring multiple departments to review the same application severely inhibit the timely and efficient construction of new PV systems.

At the same time, the majority of residential-sized PV systems installed in the United States share many similarities of design. It is the similarity and commonality of these designs that would allow for a nationally standardized expedited permit process for small-scale PV systems.

### Solar ABCs Recommendation

The solution is to begin with a consistent starting point and using the nationally standardized Expedited Permit Process. Jurisdictions can be assured that they are consistent in their application of codes and standards. Contractors can also be assured that the requirements for permitting will not vary dramatically among jurisdictions. Both of these assurances result in safe, cost effective installations and accelerate PV technology use.

The term “expedited permit process” refers to an organized permitting process by which a majority of small PV systems can be permitted quickly and easily. It is not intended to apply to all types of PV systems. The primary need and use for this process is for systems of less than 15kW maximum power output. The expedited permit process is intended to simplify the structural and electrical review of a small PV system project and minimize the need for detailed engineering studies and unnecessary delays.

The majority of PV systems installed in the U.S. meet the eligibility requirements outlined in this process and will benefit from the



requirements outlined in this process and will benefit from the ease of using a one-page expedited permit form. Using one standard permitting process will also eliminate confusion, conflicts, and reduce the time required to issue the permit.

### **Expedited Permit Process Eligibility Requirements**

- An array composed of 4 or fewer series strings.
- An inverter with rated output of 13.44 kW or less.
- Use of an engineered mounting system on a code-compliant roof and a rooftop distributed weight of less than 5 lb/sq. ft. and less than 40 lbs. per attachment.
- Use of listed components (PV, inverter, etc.).

The one-page expedited permit process and the accompanying guidelines explain each required step. The report, forms, and diagrams in the Expedited Permit Process are available online at [www.solarabcs.org/permitting](http://www.solarabcs.org/permitting) in an interactive PDF format, so that they can be filled out electronically and submitted either in printed form or via e-mail to the local jurisdiction; another cost and time saving manner.

The recommendation of this report is that local jurisdictions use this nationally standardized expedited permit process for awarding building permits to installers of small PV systems.

### **For More Information Contact:**

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### **Download the Full Report:**

[www.solarabcs.org/permitting](http://www.solarabcs.org/permitting)

### **For more information, visit the Solar ABCs Web site:**

[www.solarabcs.org](http://www.solarabcs.org)

### **A Report from the Solar America Board for Codes and Standards**

The Solar America Board for Codes and Standards (Solar ABCs) is a collaborative effort among experts to formally gather and prioritize input from the broad spectrum of solar photovoltaic stakeholders including policy makers, manufacturers, installers, and consumers resulting in coordinated recommendations to codes and standards making bodies for existing and new solar technologies. The U.S. Department of Energy funds Solar ABCs as part of its commitment to facilitate wide-spread adoption of safe, reliable, and cost-effective solar technologies.

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