

PV INDUSTRY ALERT

The rate of applications to connect solar photovoltaic (PV) systems has tripled since February 2011.

Ergon Energy continues to streamline processes to assess applications as quickly as possible.

This alert is the second in a series that will keep solar PV installers up to date with important changes, guidelines and emerging issues.

Setting maximum voltage trip points to 255V

Ergon Energy has a responsibility under the Electricity Regulations 2006 to supply electricity at standard voltage levels. To ensure this occurs, the maximum voltage trip point of the inverter must be set at 255V for a single-phase system. This is a technical requirement of Ergon Energy's IES Network Agreement. These levels are in place to protect the performance of the electricity network and to ensure the safe and effective operation of appliances and electrical devices.

Because voltage standards differ across the country, some manufacturers of solar PV inverters set the over voltage trip point above 255V. In Queensland, this needs to be reset during installation.

If voltage fluctuations from a non-compliant inverter cause unacceptable distortions on our network, Ergon Energy will ask the customer to resolve the issue and may be forced to disconnect the system until the issue is resolved.

Changes to government incentives

As you will be aware, there have been recent changes to the Queensland Government's Solar Bonus Scheme (the Scheme).

As of 8 June, applications for systems with inverters greater than 5kW are no longer eligible for the Scheme. Also, customers can only claim the Scheme for one system per premises.

Ergon Energy achieves turnaround targets

In the first PV Industry Alert, we provided guidelines on the dates that applications should be lodged to give the best possible chance of customers qualifying for the greater incentives.

We are pleased to report that in the vast majority of cases, applications were approved within the set timeframes.

However, there were a small number of applications that were not approved in time. This is because our technical assessment identified concerns about the capacity of the inverter. We have made every effort to contact each of these customers to outline their options.

Help us help your customer

The attributes of the customer's electricity services can have a bearing on our technical assessment. Aspects such as the number of phases, length and size of customer service mains, and where possible, approximate distance to nearest transformer, allow us to refine our assessment and customers may be permitted to connect larger systems.

We will soon release a new Application for Network Connection of an Inverter Energy System form, with fields for this type of information. You will be advised when the new form is available. In the meantime, we encourage you to include this additional information with the application, where possible.

All solar PV systems require network approval

A reminder to installers that a customer must not install a PV system for connection to our network without approval from Ergon Energy, regardless of system size or location. Failure to gain approval places the customer in breach of the *Electricity Regulations 2006* and could present risks to the network and to individual premises.

It could also create significant costs for you and your customer if we are unable to approve the inverter you have installed.

As a general rule, Ergon Energy undertakes a rigorous technical assessment of systems:

- with inverters of 5kW and greater,
- with inverters of 2kW and greater proposed for connection to a single wire earth return (SWER) section of the network, and
- all systems being connected to an isolated network.

However, there are occasions when we exercise our discretion to undertake technical assessments of smaller systems where there are potential risks to the quality of electricity supply.

If an application is declined, we will discuss alternative options with the customer and c.c. the written advice to the PV consultant.

Metering

We endeavour to install meters as quickly as possible after receiving the Form A. However, with the significant influx of solar PV connections, there may be delays in installing new meters.

Coming up...

We are making a number of significant changes to the way we deal with solar PV connection enquiries and applications.

We will establish a dedicated IES phone line, fax line and email address. An expanded team will also be available to help answer your questions and address issues.

If you have any questions, please contact Ergon Energy's Customer Service Team on 13 10 46, 7.00am-6.30pm, Monday to Friday.