

# PV INDUSTRY ALERT

**Solar Support Team** 1300 553 924 ■ 8.00am–5.00pm Mon-Fri ■ [energysystems@ergon.com.au](mailto:energysystems@ergon.com.au)

Welcome to alert No. 8, informing the solar PV industry about Ergon Energy's requirements for applying for and carrying out inverter energy system connections to the network.

## Huge volumes create backlogs

Ergon Energy continues to receive unprecedented volumes of Inverter Energy System (IES) Applications, as the graph to the right indicates. May saw a new record set.

This volume challenges our ability to process applications, technical assessments and meter installations. Please be patient and explain these limitations to your customers. We're working hard to maintain acceptable levels of customer service.

## Don't install before Agreements are returned

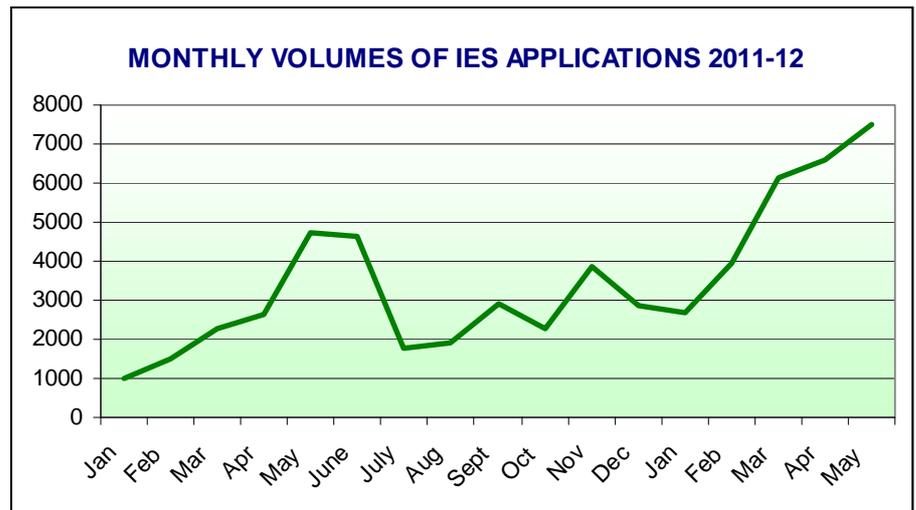
Some installers are still installing and connecting systems before their customer has received, signed and returned their IES Agreements.

Doing this places the customer in breach of the *Electricity Regulation 2006* and could create significant issues and costs for them and you.

As a deterrent, Ergon Energy is stepping up its disconnections of any system found to be connected to the network before an IES Agreement has been signed by the customer and returned to Ergon Energy.

In some cases, the inverter will need to be replaced with a smaller one and some panels removed for the system to be approved.

We encourage PV industry representatives to insist on receiving or sighting a copy of the signed Agreement before installation occurs.



At a minimum, we encourage installers to at least gain verbal confirmation from the customer that the Agreement has been returned.

Please be aware that a 'Downsize' letter from Ergon Energy advising the maximum size that would be allowable doesn't constitute an approval to install a system up to that size. A new application form must be lodged and Agreements received and signed by the customer and returned before installation can occur.

## Talk to us about bulk schemes

PV bulk-buy schemes continue to be launched, both on a community and employee basis. Such schemes generally result in a high concentration of PVs in a relatively small area, and can therefore have an adverse impact on the network and customers.

Before a scheme that you are involved in is launched, we urge you or the scheme organiser to contact our Solar Support Team to describe the intended scheme as soon as the design and location is established.

We will then have an appropriate local Ergon Energy representative contact you and/or the organiser to discuss the best outcome for you, your customers and the network.

The same recommendation applies if you are liaising with multiple customers (more than 10) within a unit complex, retirement village or caravan park.

Early advice to Ergon Energy will help you manage your processes and resources and avoid costly network upgrades later for you and your customers.

## REMINDER: Exported electricity payment

As described in *PV Industry Alert No.4*, PV systems with inverters rated 5.1 to 200kW are not eligible for any form of payment or credit from the Queensland Government or Ergon Energy Queensland (the retailer).

Larger systems may or may not attract a Power Purchase Agreement. Contact Ergon Energy on 13 10 46 for more details.

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## REMINDER: Plan for June 30

The last PV Industry Alert and various media articles recommended dates by which IES applications should be lodged to allow processing and installation before government incentives are reduced.

Ergon Energy cannot provide assurance that applications for any sized inverter received after 28 May will be processed in time for pre-30 June installation.

## REMINDER: Any application could be assessed

In PV Industry Alert No. 2 in July 2011, and on our website, we highlight that, as a rule, Ergon Energy undertakes a rigorous technical assessment of proposed inverters:

- 5kW and greater proposed for connection to the main grid,
- 2kW and greater proposed for connection to a single wire earth return (SWER) section of the network, and
- Of any size proposed to be connected to an isolated network.

However, we stress that **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.

Please do not convey to customers that if they apply for inverters below these levels that the applications won't be technically assessed, as they could be.

If, for example, we chose to assess an application for a 4kW inverter and the assessment showed 3kW is the maximum allowable at that point in the network, that is what we would advise to the customer.

## Assessments deliver value

We are aware some PV sales consultants may encourage customers to apply for systems of a size just under Ergon Energy's advertised assessment thresholds to avoid the risk of an application being downsized.

However, this may commit the customer to a system that will trip off at times due to voltage issues caused by the system being too large for that point in the network.

We encourage sales consultants to take a responsible approach and allow systems to be sized to the customer's desired level, even if that will require assessment and additional processing time.

Only then can you provide your customer with the confidence that the system has been checked for its compatibility with the local network.

## Duplicate applications

Our Solar Support Team is receiving some application forms multiple times in a short period. There seem to be several reasons for this:

- When lodged via email, and an automated acknowledgement is not received, the application is re-sent. Ergon Energy doesn't provide such acknowledgements.
- Forms are emailed separately in two file formats, e.g. JPG and PDF, or forms are emailed and faxed. Please only submit your application once.
- Confusion between the customer and sales consultant sees both sending an application. Please be clear with your customers.

Multiple applications for the one premises can delay the initial application, and other customers' applications, due to the extra time needed to identify and deal with multiples.

If you are unsure if an application has been successfully lodged, or concerned with the time taken to process it, and the customer has provided you authorisation in Part 5 of the Application form, please call the Solar Support Team.

## IMPORTANT: Checking maximum voltage trip points

Installers must check that the maximum voltage trip point is no greater than 255V for a single-phase system, or 440V for a three-phase system. Inverters are not typically factory-set to these standards and require resetting by the electrical contractor or other party.

This is a condition of all Ergon Energy IES Agreements with customers. If voltage fluctuations from a non-compliant inverter cause unacceptable distortions on our network, Ergon Energy may disconnect the system until the issue is resolved.

## Avoid grouping Form As

When electrical contractors lodge a large number of Form As together, this impacts Ergon Energy as well as your customers. Large batches can lead to less efficient scheduling of the meter installations. And if a Form A is not lodged promptly, the meter installation, and commencement of the feed-in tariff for eligible customers, may be delayed.

We appreciate you trying to lodge Form As as soon as possible after each job is complete.