

PV INDUSTRY ALERT

Solar Support Team 1300 553 924 ■ 8.00am–5.00pm Mon-Fri ■ energysystems@ergon.com.au

Welcome to alert No.11.

Meter delays due to flooding

Although not all areas of regional Queensland have experienced flooding, many of our meter installers have been reassigned to network reconstruction and repair work and support activities. As a result, customers may experience longer delays in meter installations for PV systems than customers have recently.

Even some customers who had previously agreed to target installation dates may be contacted to negotiate later target dates. Ergon Energy appreciates your support to inform customers about the meter delays and to help manage their expectations about meter installations during this challenging time.

Changes to 44c eligibility rules

On the 23 November 2012, the Queensland Government announced changes to the rules of its Solar Bonus Scheme (SBS). These changes mean that eligibility for the 44c feed-in tariff (FiT) is lost if the electricity account is closed or someone's name is added to the account. Account transfers between spouses or the addition of a spouse are exempt.

We also remind you that systems applied for before 10 July 2012 and approved as eligible for the 44c FiT must be installed and Ergon Energy must have received a Form A to define the system is ready for meter connection, by midnight 30 June 2013.

More information is available at:

<http://www.qld.gov.au/housing/buying-owning-home/energy-water-home/solar/feed-in-tariffs/solar-bonus-scheme-44c>

Rules on changing inverters

The recent floods have submerged many inverters that will need to be replaced. Please consider the

following information when selecting replacement inverters at any time:

- If it's possible to replace an inverter with one of the same brand, series and model, the replacement can be made and Ergon Energy's Solar Support Team advised by phone or email afterwards.
- If you're intending to install a different inverter to the one listed on the original application form, you'll need to lodge a new application form, even if the new inverter has the same AC Power rating. Ergon Energy's approval letter must be received by the customer before the inverter can be installed. Another examination will be conducted.
- An increase in the total inverter capacity will make the system ineligible for the 44c FiT, if relevant. A reduction in, or maintenance of, the inverter size will not affect eligibility for the 44c FiT.
- If the customer wishes to use the replacement opportunity to increase their system size, be aware that the new application may undergo a technical assessment. If the maximum capacity advised by Ergon Energy is less than the size originally approved and installed, that will be the maximum that can be re-applied for and ultimately installed.

If you have other questions about replacing inverters, please contact our Solar Support Team on 1300 553 924 or via email.

New rules on array upgrades

Whenever panels are proposed to be added to an array, the normal application form must be completed, even if there is no change to the inverter. In the section titled 'Upgrading existing system?', selecting the option 'Yes, panels/turbines only' highlights the application to us as an upgrade.

Please try to complete as much of the usual information as possible.

In line with an initial application, installers must wait until the customer has received written approval from Ergon Energy before installing the extra panels.

Assessing rural and larger properties

When completing application forms, please provide as much information as possible about the customer's electrical installation, particularly for rural and larger properties. Information could include:

- Length, size and material of consumer mains and sub-mains; and
- Relative location of the building on which the array will be mounted, e.g. metres from road and/or point of attachment.

This will reduce our need to use conservative assumptions and likely enhance the assessment outcome.

Testing improves outcomes

There's an increasing incidence of inverters constantly tripping off, typically arising from PV systems installed on rural and other large properties. Our investigations often reveal that the limited capacity of the customer's electrical installation is the main reason for, or at a least a contributor to, the poor performance of the system. Sometimes, it's due to the PV capacity not being spread over the two or three available phases.

We strongly urge sales consultants and installers to work together to assess the ability of the electrical installation to accommodate the customer's desired system size.

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Ideally, before establishing a sales contract and lodging a network connection application, an electrical contractor should conduct a:

- Fault Loop Impedance Test at the point where the inverter connects to the switchboard, and
- Spot voltage tests at relevant points in the premises.

The test outcomes and electrical installation attributes should then be detailed on the application form, potentially providing for a larger system to be allowed than otherwise possible

Obligations with micro-inverters

Installing micro-inverters places the same obligations on the customer and installer as normal inverters. If you're intending to add panels with micro-inverters to an existing system, an IES application form will still need to be lodged for the additional capacity, and approval must be received by the customer before installation can take place.

Installing additional capacity will result in the customer losing their eligibility for the 44c FiT if relevant, or even losing the 8c FiT if relevant if the total inverter capacity exceeds 5kW.

Ergon Energy is able to identify increases in array capacity through metering data. Customers who arrange installation of an inverter without approval are in breach of the *Electricity Regulation 2006*. Electrical contractors who fail to request the distributor to examine the installation also face penalties under the *Electrical Safety Act*.

Because our meter installers aren't generally able to visibly inspect micro-inverters, from tomorrow (15 February 2013), installers of micro-inverters must list the following details on the Form A:

- Brand
- Series
- Model
- AC Power rating
- Number of micro-inverters.

Please include these details in the:

- 'Other Request Comments' field, or
- 'Additional information about request' field.

The meter installer will check this against the application form. Without these details on the Form A, the meter cannot be installed and a wasted truck visit fee may be charged.

Please advise inverter location on Form A

Usually, the inverter is installed close to the meter board where it is easily visible to our meter installers. However, sometimes the location is not obvious and/or access to it is restricted. An inability to find or access the inverter may prevent the meter being installed, and may result in a wasted truck visit fee being charged.

Installers, to avoid this, please add notes to your Form A about the location of the inverter and any access requirements, even if it's as simple as 'Inverter next to meter board'.

Please include notes in either the:

- 'Other Request Comments' field, or
- 'Additional information about request' field.

Endorsed inverters with storage

There is an increasing number of inverters with storage capability being accredited under AS4777, however, not all of them are endorsed for use on the Ergon Energy network or comply with the requirements for the Queensland Government's SBS.

We have compiled a list of storage-capable inverters that have been endorsed for use on the Ergon Energy network and comply with the requirements for the SBS. Note that several other conditions apply for the customer to be eligible to receive the SBS and their application is still subject to the normal application and approval process. The current list is:

SMA

- Sunny Backup – SBU5000

Selectronic

- SP PRO – SPMC 240-AU
- SP PRO – SPMC 241-AU
- SP PRO – SPMC 481-AU
- SP PRO – SPMC 482-AU

PowerRouter

- PR50SB-PR/S24
- PR37SB-PR/S24
- PR30SB-PR/S24

It's important to remember that all these listed inverters require setting changes or minimum firmware versions to comply with Ergon Energy's requirements. If you are intending to install one of these inverters, please contact our Solar Support Team (details at top of page) to request our specifications.

If there are other storage-capable inverters that you would like us to evaluate, please make your request via our Solar Support Team.

Note: While every effort is made by Ergon Energy, we make no representation or warranty about the suitability, accuracy or completeness of content of this information for any purpose. Recipients need to make their own assessment of the matters presented herein and are advised to verify all relevant representations, statements and information. Ergon Energy will not be liable for any false, inaccurate, inappropriate or incomplete information contained herein.