

Solar Automated Permit Processing (SolarAPP) Benefits

NREL is building an advanced online permitting portal

The SolarAPP is a collaborative effort to foster rooftop solar adoption by making it easier for local governments overwhelmed by residential solar applications to quickly and safely approve most rooftop projects for installation.

Our first project is led by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), who is working with an all-star team of experts to build an online permitting platform that will automate rooftop solar plan review and produce compliant approvals instantly. Our team includes solar industry groups, cities and counties, code bodies, environmental organizations, government entities.. and you. See the full list on our website at solarapp.nrel.gov

Online permitting saves tax dollars

AHJ resources are not used well when they are asked to review and approve permit applications that are incomplete, rife with error, or never reach construction or inspection at all. SolarAPP automates permit approvals for qualified systems and allows local governments to focus on tougher projects and technologies. SolarAPP's compliance checks ensure that safe installations can proceed, while removing stale applications from the AHJ's workload.

When available during summer 2020, the SolarAPP portal will:

- Be free to pilot and adopt
- Standardize permit applications and inspection checklists
- Block non-compliant applications from entering AHJ workload
- Perform automated plan review with compliance checks, enabling instant approval for qualified systems
- Provide online fee payment and digital record tracking, if needed
- Be able to stand alone or integrate with existing government software and inspection platforms
- Ensure that city and county manual plan review and inspection resources are aligned and used efficiently
- Expand to more renewable energy and smart home tech, keeping cities up to date with relevant code
- Incorporate and centralize a marketplace of resources and training materials from code bodies and expert organizations

Online permitting is already popular

Online and instant permitting is common practice for many localities in the US. We can work with an AHJ whether or not they are already online. We built on examples from Nevada, Florida, California, South Carolina, Texas, New York and more. Several jurisdictions across these states provide instant permits after installers enter full design and component details. Our system goes one step further by providing an inspection checklist to hold installers accountable to their approved application.

When rooftop solar installation hurdles are simplified effectively, customers are happier and adoption rates go up. In turn, local governments benefit from greater resilience, flexibility, and localized economic development.

"We just changed the order of the way we do things to improve customer service and efficiency for the user," North Las Vegas Spokeswoman Delen Goldberg told the Las Vegas Sun. "And that's good for everyone. It creates jobs. It creates [a] tax base.. It helps the city, and that helps us do more for our residents."

Join us by sharing your contact information through our website at solarapp.nrel.gov or email Jeff.Cook@nrel.gov