

The Solar Industry's Commitment

Background on SEIA & Consumer Protection

The Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) is the national trade association for the solar industry in America. SEIA was founded in 1974 and has approximately 1,000 member companies doing business in all fifty states and the District of Columbia, the vast majority of which are small businesses.

SEIA and the solar industry are committed to increased consumer protection. For solar to realize its full potential as an American economic engine, and provide Americans with competitive power choices, customers must fully understand solar transactions.

In 2015, SEIA launched a Consumer Protection Committee made up of leading legal experts in solar and consumer law. Through this committee's work, we are educating consumers, industry and government; promoting model contracts and disclosure forms; and upholding a voluntary but enforceable national solar business code - the first of its kind for our industry - to ensure a responsible transition to a clean energy economy.

Commitment to Education

SEIA the solar industry are committed to educating all stakeholders about solar consumer protection issues. SEIA has published industry alerts and compliance materials to help industry better understand consumer protection rules and regulations, such as telemarketing laws. SEIA has hosted webinars to provide consumers, government, media and the industry itself a greater understanding about the solar transaction. Webinar topics include advertising laws, the SEIA Solar Business Code and SEIA Residential Consumer Guide to Solar Power. SEIA enlists experts to present "deep dives" into laws and regulations governing solar transactions.

Most SEIA-hosted conferences also include consumer protection panels, including Solar Power International, the largest solar trade show in America with approximately 20,000 attendees. Panelists include speakers from industry, law firms, government and other organizations with expertise in consumer law and regulation to increase both consumer and industry understanding on solar transactions.

SEIA Residential Consumer Guide to Solar Power

SEIA strongly recommends all solar companies read and use the SEIA Residential Consumer Guide to Solar Power, an extensively peer-reviewed guide that provides a key overview of residential solar systems and transactions. The guide, available in both English and Spanish, reviews types of solar ownership models, including cash purchases and leasing agreements, key contract terms, and how consumers can stay informed.

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SEIA's efforts are built around a single tenet: Increase consumer understanding of solar transactions”

From analyzing their homes' solar suitability to learning about key terms in a contract, this guide keeps consumers in the know throughout the process of going solar. Included are key questions that consumers should ask of solar companies. There is also a list of options for working out issues with solar companies, including SEIA's Complaint Resolution Process. In 2016, SEIA along with the Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA) released the Residential Consumer Guide to Community Solar.

Large scale solar projects are expanding rapidly throughout the U.S. and need acres of land. In an effort to better serve landowners interested in leasing their unused or underused land to solar developers, SEIA developed the SEIA Guide to Land Leases for Solar. The guide covers the important aspects of working with a solar developer, from initial site visit to lease finalization.

Disclosure Forms & Standard Contracts

To aid consumer understanding of solar, SEIA has developed standardized agreement disclosure forms for leases, power purchase agreements (PPAs) and system purchases. Disclosures give a snapshot of key terms in solar transactions and encourage discussions between consumers and solar companies. States like Nevada and Florida have already implemented official disclosure forms based on the forms developed by SEIA.

SEIA formally adopted model lease and power purchase agreement (PPA) contracts developed through a working group of law firms and investment professionals. The standardized forms are intended to ease the burden on companies that don't have the ability to draft their own agreements and to ensure that transactions pass muster on consumer protection.

SEIA Solar Business Code

The heart of SEIA's consumer protection work is the voluntary SEIA Solar Business Code. The Code was formally adopted by SEIA in 2015 and all SEIA member companies must abide by the Code. Many other non-members are choosing to follow its rules as well.

The Code presents rules on advertising, marketing and consumer interactions and contracts, and reminds companies about state and federal laws and regulations. SEIA recognizes no code can cover every set of circumstances. Experience and market evolution will require changes to the Code and SEIA will regularly review and revise it to stay relevant, effective and fair.

Complaint Resolution Process

Sometimes issues arise in a solar transaction. SEIA created a Complaint Resolution Process under which anyone – from individual homeowner to solar company – can bring a complaint with SEIA. When receiving a formal complaint, SEIA encourages companies and consumers to directly resolve their issues. If that is not possible, SEIA's Resolution Panels present a more formal complaint review process. Together, consumers and companies now have an industry-level dispute resolution process that also helps educate the greater industry about proper conduct. Inquiries regarding complaints can be sent to consumer@seia.org.

To access these resources and many more, visit www.seia.org/consumers
For questions and concerns, email consumer@seia.org