

Background on SEIA and Consumer Protection

SEIA and the solar industry are committed to increased consumer protection for Americans who invest in solar and storage. For solar and storage to realize its full potential as an American economic engine, and provide Americans with competitive power choices, customers must fully understand solar transactions and companies must hold themselves to the highest ethical standards and business practices

Since 2015, SEIA has continued to facilitate the work of its Consumer Protection Committee made up of leading legal experts in solar and consumer law. Through this work, we are educating consumers, industry and government; promoting best practices with model contracts and disclosure forms; and upholding a national solar business code to ensure a positive experience for consumers.

Commitment to Education

SEIA and 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. SEIA published its Consumer Protection Primer to catalogue key federal and state consumer protection laws and marketing topics that residential solar companies need to know. The primer is currently being updated to reflect changes in state law. SEIA has also released an installation best practices guide to promote quality system design and installations.

SEIA continues to host webinars and conference panels to provide consumers, government, media and the industry itself a greater understanding about the solar transaction and regulations.

In 2023, SEIA took several important steps to enhance its educational resources. SEIA launched its free Consumer Protection 101 video series, which traces key consumer protection laws and topics for the solar and storage industry. SEIA also released an updated version of The Consumer Guide to Solar Power and two new factsheets: The 25D Tax Credit: What Homeowners Need to Know; and California Net Billing Info: Residential and Commercial Solar Customers. SEIA has also translated its consumer facing resources into Spanish and other foreign languages.

Disclosure Forms and Standard Contracts

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 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 help 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.

Residential Consumer Guide to Solar Power

SEIA's Residential Consumer Guide to Solar Power is an extensively peer-reviewed guide that provides a key overview of residential solar systems and transactions. The guide reviews solar ownership models, including cash purchases and leasing agreements, key contract terms, and how consumers can stay informed.

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. SEIA along with the Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA) released the Residential Consumer Guide to Community Solar, which is also being updated as community solar continues to grow.

ANSI STANDARDS ACCREDITATION



SEIA is approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) as an Accredited Standards Development Organization. SEIA can convene industry stakeholders to develop national standards for the U.S. solar and storage industry and received the greenlight to develop consumer protection standards. The first set of consumer protection standards focuses on salesperson training, contract disclosures, and marketing claims. SEIA has also begun developing residential installation standards. All standards will be released for public review and comment. SEIA expects to release the installation standard for public review in Q1 2024 and the consumer protection standards for public review in Q3 2024.

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.