



20 things to check for when buying a PV solar electric system

Make sure that:

- 1) you get at least 3 bids in writing (don't accept oral quotes) based on an actual, in-person site evaluation
- 2) the bids come directly from licensed (California card-carrying) contractors who can provide you with their contractor's license up front and will be doing (and warranting) the work themselves, not just some "retailer" who will farm you out to some random installer
- 3) the panels are from one of the four major manufacturers (Sharp -- #1 Market share; BP Solar, #2; Kyocera, #3; Shell Solar, #4, as of 2001 global market data) since there will be major "consolidation" in this industry in the next 5 years, and you'll want to make sure your panel manufacturer is still around five or ten years from now if you need to make a warranty claim
- 4) the contractor has more than just a C-46 solar hot water license – they should have an A (general engineering), B (general contracting), or C-10 (electrical) license for best results – and check the status of that license with the CSLB (www.cslb.ca.gov) to see if there are any legal actions against that licensee
- 5) the contractor has insurance (not required by the CSLB, unlike limited \$7,500 bonding, and the insurance should be a minimum of \$1Million), for comprehensive liability coverage and worker's compensation (or uses sub-contractors who have worker's comp coverage)
- 6) you get the details on what size panel in Watts DC and what quantity of panels are being used, so that you know the actual size of that bid in total Watts DC and can use that in calculating the installed price per Watt DC
- 7) you get the make, model and quantity of inverters, so that you can check the number of Watts DC that are being placed on each inverter – some installers will "jam" too many Watts into each inverter to artificially lower their price, but you might end up with an inverter that is prematurely worn-out from being overworked – the SMA SunnyBoy should have no more than 2,500 Watts DC, and the SunnyBoy 1800 no more than 1800 Watts DC
- 8) you get at least six (6) named references of existing installations that you can (and should) contact before you sign their contract – you don't want to be a guinea pig for some new, inexperienced installer
- 9) you get the contractor's assurance in writing in the contract that all equipment will be "factory-fresh", "brand-new" and will be in the original factory boxes which you'll have the right to inspect and reject if not to your liking prior to installation
- 10) you get the contractor to agree in writing in the contract that all permits will be applied for, and that all work will be subject to inspection by the local building authority
- 11) you get the contractor's agreement in writing in the contract that he/she will attend all of the permit inspections, as well as the PG&E interconnection inspection prior to the system being officially connected to the PG&E grid
- 12) the price quoted is on a formal "home improvement" contract blessed by the CSLB for your protection, and that it has contingencies for rebate, interconnection and permits being approved
- 13) the price quoted in that contract includes everything (equipment, permits, installation, warranty, sales tax) and is a "complete" system price
- 14) the price quoted in that contract is an after-rebate price, and that the rebate amount has been provided to you for reference
- 15) the contractor will accept the rebate check as partial payment – that way you don't wait for the check from the state and you're not exposed to possible income taxes on that rebate
- 16) the down payment as specified by that contract is no more than \$1,000 or 10% of the total, whichever is less – that's the law according to the CSLB regulations
- 17) you compare "apples to apples" on price by comparing the after-rebate \$ per DC Watt since each bid will most likely be slightly different in size – a system (A) priced at \$14,000 for 3.0 kW DC is NOT a bargain compared to a system (B) priced at \$14,400 for 3.6 kW DC since (A)'s price per Watt DC is \$4.66, while (B)'s price per Watt DC is only \$4.00 per Watt DC, over 14% LESS per Watt, which is how everything in this business is priced (\$ per Watt DC)
- 18) you get an estimate in writing of the kWh production you can expect per month (each month of the year, by name – January, February, March, etc.) from your system once it's installed
- 19) you use this checklist for all folks you call – it's for your benefit since we want you to be informed a consumer as you can be
- 20) you call us at Sky Power Systems -- we guarantee* to meet or beat any "in writing" price per Watt DC from any firm in our market that complies with all the items from this checklist!

Why do we insist on providing you with this checklist? Because we firmly believe that the more informed you are as a PV solar electric system consumer, the more likely you are to buy that system from us at Sky Power Systems – that's just good business practice to us.

**Conditions and limitations apply, and competitive bids will need to be examined in detail for design completeness and accuracy.*



Checklist for Comparing PV Solar Electric Bids

Bidder Name: Sky Power Systems

License #: 800947 Type: B

System Price: _____

Watts DC as Quoted: _____

Price per Watt DC: _____

Check List Item # 1:

Check List Item # 2:

Check List Item # 3:

Check List Item # 4:

Check List Item # 5:

Check List Item # 6:

Check List Item # 7:

Check List Item # 8:

Check List Item # 9:

Check List Item #10:

Check List Item #11:

Check List Item #12:

Check List Item #13:

Check List Item #14:

Check List Item #15:

Check List Item #16:

Check List Item #17:

Check List Item #18:

Check List Item #19:

Check List Item #20:

Bidder Name: _____

License #: _____ Type: _____

System Price: _____

Watts DC as Quoted: _____

Price per Watt DC: _____

Check List Item # 1:

Check List Item # 2:

Check List Item # 3:

Check List Item # 4:

Check List Item # 5:

Check List Item # 6:

Check List Item # 7:

Check List Item # 8:

Check List Item # 9:

Check List Item #10:

Check List Item #11:

Check List Item #12:

Check List Item #13:

Check List Item #14:

Check List Item #15:

Check List Item #16:

Check List Item #17:

Check List Item #18:

Check List Item #19:

Check List Item #20:

Bidder Name: _____

License #: _____ Type: _____

System Price: _____

Watts DC as Quoted: _____

Price per Watt DC: _____

Check List Item # 1:

Check List Item # 2:

Check List Item # 3:

Check List Item # 4:

Check List Item # 5:

Check List Item # 6:

Check List Item # 7:

Check List Item # 8:

Check List Item # 9:

Check List Item #10:

Check List Item #11:

Check List Item #12:

Check List Item #13:

Check List Item #14:

Check List Item #15:

Check List Item #16:

Check List Item #17:

Check List Item #18:

Check List Item #19:

Check List Item #20: