

SOLAR EXPORT APPROVAL PACK



Welcome to the growing community of our customers who are choosing to install rooftop solar. At the start of 2021, more than 1 in 5 of homes in the Powercor network had solar panels on their roof and this number is growing rapidly.

This pack provides information on our role in the process to connect rooftop solar and what to expect from the experience when the new system is generating power. It's all designed to help you make the most of your investment in solar.

Installation and connection

Connection request

Now that you've received export approval, the next step is to work with your solar installer to finalise the installation arrangements and connection to our network.

Your installer will submit the Connection Request through our online eConnect service. We recommend you ask your installer to include your contact details on the request as well so we can keep you informed on all progress directly.

Based on this request, we will reconfigure the smart meter which measures the energy consumed in your home. We manage your meter and provide the meter data to energy retailers who issue your electricity bill.

So ensuring your meter is tracking the amount of excess power you export into our network is a critical part of making sure you get the full value from solar.

Talk to your energy retailer

We will notify your energy retailer that there has been a change to your meter to establish your home as an 'embedded generator' approved for solar exports.

However, they'll want to work with you directly to agree the feed-in tariff you are entitled to be paid for the kilowatts you export. You'll see this come through on your electricity bills.

While you're talking with them, check you're on the right energy plan and tariff for any power

you consume from our network. This can help ensure you minimise your electricity costs.

For example, from 1 July 2021, there are new tariff options we're making available to provide a financial incentive for using solar power during the day. Make sure you find out more about what Time of Use Tariffs your energy retailer is offering.

Smart inverter settings are critical to good results

An inverter is one of the essential features of your rooftop solar system. It is the device that converts your solar energy into power you can use in your home. It also links with our electricity network and is a safety device. The inverter will automatically switch off your rooftop solar system (or 'trip') if something goes wrong.

Since December 2019, smart inverters are mandatory on all Victorian rooftop solar systems.

These advanced units have power quality and voltage settings that will make your system more resilient to fluctuations in power voltage on our network. Otherwise, these can cause trips which

mean your system will not be generating power anymore for your home or to export.

Check with your solar installer to make sure your smart inverter is set properly in order to get the best results from your system.

We'll be asking your solar installer to certify that the smart inverter has been set correctly and turned on when your solar system is live. Groups like the Solar Victoria, Clean Energy Council and Clean Energy Regulator also conduct audits of smart inverters because of the important role they play.

Keep a copy of your Generation Deed

Your installer will submit a contract with us on your behalf letting us know your system is installed.

This contract registers your solar connection and is called the 'Model Standing Offer' or Generation Deed. It is essentially an agreement between you as our customer and us as your electricity distributor and confirms:

- the solar system has been installed with the right smart inverter settings working
- the system is set to export the maximum amount of power approved in our Solar Export Pre-Approval to you
- your obligations as the owner and operator of an 'embedded generator' exporting power into our network.

Solar generation experience

Be prepared for 'trips'

Like all electricity networks where there is a high penetration of solar, we've found the demand for new connections is growing faster than our network can accommodate.

We are constantly improving our network's capacity to accept more solar as well as electric vehicles, batteries and other new technologies.

We also have a responsibility to all our customers to make sure solar can be safely exported into our network. Solar exports can affect power quality because by injecting electricity, they impact on the voltage. This potentially impacts other customers including those without solar.

Maintaining the network voltage is a delicate balance within a narrow window of between

216V and 253V. Anything lower can lead to 'brown outs' or difficulties in starting up sensitive appliances like pool pumps and air conditioners. Anything higher can lead to power surges and 'trip' solar systems.

In the short-term, be prepared for the occasional 'trip' to your solar system. This can happen when there is high demand for capacity in our powerlines for solar exports. But please be reassured that over time, your solar experience will keep getting better as we upgrade our network.

Make sure your solar installer briefs you on how to reset your smart inverter when it trips so you can continue to benefit from your solar generation.

Set appliances to use your solar power

Air conditioners and large appliances like dishwashers, washing machines and dryers consume a lot of power. They also often come with delay and/or timer settings so you can easily program them to run during certain times of the day.

For example, plan to pre-cool or pre-heat your home if it is convenient, in order to make

the most of the solar power available during the day. Or time your dishwasher to operate during the peak solar generation hours during the day. Depending on the season, this is around 10.00am to 3.00pm.

It's a simple way to use the solar you're generating and save electricity costs.

Maintenance and safety checks are important

Your solar installer will give you a maintenance schedule for your solar system.

Regular maintenance checks can make a big difference to the performance of the system by ensuring it is operating correctly and safely for everyone (including any of our line workers nearby).

For example, dust, bird droppings, moss and other debris like leaf matter can block the sun from being absorbed by the solar panels. Faults may also occur in the installed equipment itself.

You can organise the checks through a licenced electrician or your solar installer.

For more information

If you have any questions regarding your network connection, please contact our team dedicated to helping solar customers at: embeddedgeneration@powercor.com.au

About CitiPower and Powercor

CitiPower and Powercor are leading network distributors, responsible for moving electricity to and from more than 1.1 million homes and businesses across the western suburbs of Melbourne, central and western Victoria, Melbourne's CBD and inner suburbs.

We are playing a critical role in enabling Victoria's clean energy transition. More than 1765MW of solar, wind and other renewable generation is connected to the Powercor network, while more than 67MW of solar generation is connected to the CitiPower network.

The Powercor network is made up of almost 90,000 kilometres of wires and more than 588,000 poles and associated infrastructure. The CitiPower network comprises almost 7600 kilometres of wires and more than 57,000 poles and associated infrastructure.

Our teams operate from 14 depots, our Bendigo-based customer contact centre and our CBD headquarters, to deliver reliable, safe and affordable electricity by operating, managing and maintaining all network assets and metering services.