

Media Release

Energy Safe Victoria

17 May, 2022

ESV instrumental in delivering safer solar installation standard

Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) has welcomed a new Australian Standard that will strengthen the safety of solar photovoltaic (PV) installations.

The new Standards will come into effect on Friday, 20 May and allows solar installers to keep pace with innovations across the solar industry, while reducing the risk of house fires.

The key change delivered by Standard AS/NZS 5033 focuses on direct current (DC) isolators, which provide an additional safety mechanism that shuts down solar PV systems in case of an emergency.

In Australia, DC isolators are typically installed on roofs next to solar panels, which exposes them to rain, wind and other elements. In some cases, incorrectly installed DC isolators or those damaged over time can pose a potential fire hazard.

The new Standards reduce that risk by providing installers different options on how solar panel systems can be isolated and no longer mandates the installation of an isolator on the roof for all installations.

ESV representatives chaired the committee that delivered the new Standard, which was initially published on 19 November 2021 and included a six-month transition period. This period ends on Friday.

Victoria leads the nation in solar installation safety, with stringent, industry-leading standards put in place when Solar Victoria launched in 2018 that prompted a lift in safety standards industry-wide that have set the Australian benchmark.

Since the beginning of 2020, audits of solar systems installed under the Victorian Government's Solar Homes Program have found the number of unsafe installations has dropped from 2.2 per cent to zero due to education and training provided to industry, along with enforcement by Victorian Government agencies including ESV.

In March, ESV and Solar Victoria also launched the Show Your Solar Some Love campaign, urging Victorians to have their solar systems serviced by a licensed A-Grade electrician every two years.

Regular servicing reduces the risk of failure and fire, which is a risk particularly among older, unserviced solar systems. Servicing by a licensed A-Grade electrician at least once every two years mitigates the risk and ensures solar PV systems are working safely and efficiently.

Servicing includes electrical testing of the components that make up a solar panel system, as well as a thorough visual inspection to ensure the integrity of equipment and cabling. It also includes the clearing of debris and leaf litter under the solar panels and around the inverter.

People should be aware of unlicensed workers offering solar cleaning or maintenance.

For more information go to esv.vic.gov.au/campaigns/solar-safety.

ESV Commissioner and Chairperson Marnie Williams

"As more people take up solar, ESV will continue to work to ensure all solar systems are installed safely and efficiently."

"We've played a major role in the delivery of these new Standards, which protect Victorians from house fires and damage caused by exposed DC isolators."

"We're also calling on all Victorian solar users to ensure their systems are serviced by a licensed A-Grade electrician at least once every two years."

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