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SOLAR CONTRACTOR LICENSING IN FLORIDA

As public interest in solar energy grows, and as public policies shift to encourage its use, more and more people consider careers in solar energy. One of those career tracks involves the sale and installation of solar equipment. In Florida, solar energy systems must be installed by a licensed contractor. While the person performing the actual installation does not need a license, they must be employed by and work under the supervision of a licensed contractor.

The Florida Legislature and the Construction Industry Licensing Board (CILB) have established the scope of work for solar contractors. There are two solar contractor categories: Certified Solar Contractor (CV) and Residential Solar Water Heating Specialty Contractor (CW).

The CV license scope of work covers residential and commercial solar water heating, solar pool heating and photovoltaic (solar electric, or PV) systems. The CV license holder is exempt from subcontracting certain roofing, plumbing and electrical work on residential installations. Electrical contractors (EC) are also authorized to install PV systems, but may be required to subcontract roofing work if the local building department so requires.

The CW license is no longer offered, but those who currently hold that license may continue to operate. The scope of work for the CW license is limited to solar water heating and solar pool heating systems on residences only. The CW license holder is not authorized to install PV systems and is not authorized to install solar water heating or pool heating systems on commercial buildings. Since the CW license does not have these tasks included in its scope of work, a CW license holder may not subcontract the work to an authorized license holder (such as an electrical contractor or CV solar contractor). Plumbing contractors (CF) are also authorized to install solar water heaters and pool heaters, but may be required to subcontract roofing and electrical work if the local building department so requires. Plumbing contractors are not authorized to install PV systems.

If a CW license holder serves as the prime contractor on a job outside of its scope of work, it will likely be considered to be engaging in unlicensed activity. A subcontractor who performs work for a CW license holder that is outside the scope of the CW license will likely be considered as aiding and abetting an unlicensed contractor.

Several local licensing jurisdictions have established a solar contractor certificate of competency that is usually designated as an RX license. These are limited to the installation of solar water or pool heaters only within the jurisdiction that has granted the license, and generally will not be authorized to install PV systems.

Solar pool heaters may also be installed by Swimming Pool Contractors (CP, RP).

To qualify for a state license, you need four years of field experience in the category of licensure you wish to obtain. One of those four years must be supervisory experience. You can also substitute up to three years of college credit hours for experience. You must complete the Florida contractor's examination and provide proof of experience in the category for which you wish to become licensed. For more information, including links to important forms, visit:

http://www.myflorida.com/dbpr/pro/cilb/documents/cilb_faqs.pdf

Legal Citations:

Rule 61G4-15.012, FAC, Certification of Residential Solar Water Heating Specialty Contractors.

Rule 61G4-15.021, FAC, Certification of Solar Contractors.

Section 489.105(3)(o), Fla. Stat.; Section 489.113(3)(f), Fla. Stat.