



# Emerald Coast Solar



**WE PUT THE POWER OF THE SUN TO WORK FOR YOU!**

## ***25 Questions for any company you are considering as your solar installation team.***

With the increased demand, more and more companies are offering solar installs, and while competition is usually good for the consumer, we would offer the following list of questions to ask and or check on with any company you are thinking of using to supply and install your grid tie solar system. Solar is a major purchase, one that can save you 10's of thousands of pesos over the life of the system. It is in your best interests to ensure you get a quality install, done by a quality company, that will back up their products with excellent warranties and service.

Most people know very little about solar, depending instead on the "experts" to have your best interests in mind, when recommending a system for your home.

It is important to remember, that beach solar systems, face a much harsher environment than systems installed away from the beach.

This document, with our responses, is included in our information booklet we provide at our initial meeting.

1) Are the installers certified to install solar systems and where did they get their certification?

2) How many systems does the company have in operation?

3) Ask for references!!! And contact the references supplied!! As well, check the internet and ask what people know of this company. It is important to get as many references as possible. Having 1, 2 or even 5 references is easy for any company to do. Providing you with 10, 15, 20 or more clients to contact takes a lot more effort and the best companies should have this easily for you. You can then decide, contact a few or contact them all. As well, ask for references that span at least 2 years. A company may be great at the initial install but have no follow up. You want a company that is great at both initial install and ongoing follow up/maintenance.

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- 4) What customer support is offered and is there a cost for this support?
  
- 5) How does the company handle a warranty issue? This is an important question because under normal circumstances your system could be down for days or even weeks, while the equipment in question is checked out.
  
- 6) Does the company have a guaranteed time that they will have your system back in operation, if there is a problem? If so, what is the penalty to the company if they fail to live up to their guarantee?
  
- 7) Does the company have a guaranteed response time if you have a problem and is there a charge for this service? Also, and perhaps most important - what will they do for you if they fail to respond in the guaranteed time?
  
- 8) Does the company put everything in writing? Any one can say anything to you but, it has no force and effect unless it is in writing. If a company representative commits to do something, make sure you get it in writing and in a language you can understand.
  
- 9) Does the company offer a maintenance program and if so, what is the charge?
  
- 10) Does the company only use new equipment and, what is the quality of the equipment used? For example, most decent solar panels carry a 12 year+ warranty against manufacturers' defects and such things as perforation. However, as far as I know, no manufacturer specifically guarantees against salt corrosion. What you need to look for at the very least, are panels that have been tested in a high salt environment. In fact, one company producing panels in Mexico only has a 2-year warranty and specifically excludes high salt environments - not the panels you want to use at the beach. Please watch for our list of ten questions to ask about solar panels.
  
- 11) Does the company base their system recommendation solely on what your average CFE bill has been for the past year or, do they take the time to sit down with you and discuss your current AND future energy requirements?
  
- 12) Does the company take the time to look at how you are consuming your energy and make recommendations to lessen your consumption and thereby, reduce the size of system you will require?

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- 13) Does the company offer you options - such as different sized systems to meet your needs, not only now, but into the future, that will allow for expansion of the system?
- 14) Does the company do a site inspection before giving you a quote? This is very important as many factors can affect the install of a solar system and our roofs are generally littered with satellite dishes, air conditioners, tinacos etc. that can all affect where and how a system is installed. This can also affect the final cost of the system, leaving you with a nasty surprise at the completion.
- 15) Does the company handle everything from the initial paperwork with CFE through to the system going online and into service?
- 16) Does the company have someone you can talk to? It is important to be able to deal with someone who can understand you and you can understand. While we do live in Mexico and it would be great if we all spoke Spanish, the fact is many of us struggle with learning a new language and a purchase of this magnitude should not be open to misinterpretation due to a language issue.
- 17) Does the company provide a quotation and contract for services and installation in English?
- 18) Is the quotation detailed and does it offer you options?
- 19) Is the company prepared to explain all the parts that go into the installation as to type of materials used and why, brand of panels and their specifications, type of support structure to be built and how the system will be secured to your roof?
- 20) During and after meeting with the company representative, how do you feel? If you feel like you should take a shower you may not want to have that company do your installation. If, on the other hand you feel like you would like to get to know the person better, the company may be a good choice.
- 21) What does the company offer that is not offered by other companies? There should be a reason for going with one company over another. It may be price, it may be service, it may be what one company offers that others do not, or it may be just the feeling you get from sitting down with the company representative, but there needs to be something that makes the decision easy for you. Having something that nobody else can or is offering, may help to make your decision easier.

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22) What does the company do differently for a beach area install, compared to an install in Merida? The beach is a different climate and presents different challenges, compared to installing away from the beach. It is important to know if the installation company takes these differences into consideration, when designing your beach area system. How do they account for the higher winds, the higher salt content in the air, the blowing sand and the greater chance of ammonia corrosion from bird droppings?

23) Does the company have solar installed on their house(s) and or business? If so, did they do the installation? If not, why not?

24) Does the company have a full-time installation staff or are they just resellers? This question is really important when it comes to areas such as quality control for the installation, system maintenance and who deals with problems and/or warranty issues.

25) As many companies down here do many different things, the question you should be asking is: What is the primary focus of the company? Is it solar or is solar either a new add to the company or is it something they do as well as other stuff? If it is an addition to what the company already does, say construction, what is going to take precedence now and in the future? Will it be your install/maintenance/or problem or, will it be the new construction job they have underway.

Please watch for our articles on 10 questions to ask about solar panels, 10 questions to ask about solar system inverters and 5 questions to ask about the solar system support structure.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. We hope you will consider Emerald Coast Solar when deciding on a company to install solar on your home or business. For more information please contact:

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