



Preventing Solar Panel Theft

Solar panel systems are a prime target for thieves. With prices ranging up to \$1000 per system, hundreds of them are stolen each year and re-sold for profit. When theft occurs, solar panel owners lose the investment they made in the panels, and they could also be without power for days, which worsens the loss with severe business interruption and discontinuity of services. Give high priority to securing your solar panels against theft. Here are some best practices for providing such security.

Reputable Installers

If you haven't yet had your solar panel system installed, spend some time doing detailed research to find a reputable, licensed installer with positive references. Several cases of theft have turned out to be committed by installers themselves, as they are already familiar with how to dismantle the panels. Ensure that all the information you have about the installer is accurate and cross-checked.

Interlocking Racks

Ensure that the installers are providing the best system given your budget. Good systems usually come with large, interlocking racks for the panels, because they are too heavy and complicated for thieves to steal, unless the theft is an inside job.

Motion Lighting

Install motion-detecting lights on the roof area surrounding the panels so that attention will be called to any unauthorized persons. Although lighting may not stop the thieves in their tracks, it is an effective way of increasing their visibility and making it more difficult for them to succeed.

Security Fasteners

Check with solar panel vendors to get special security fasteners for your panels, e.g., Unirac or ProSolar. Thieves eventually develop new tools for getting past these fasteners, so the fasteners should only be used in conjunction with other security measures. Even if a thief can dismantle the fasteners, it will slow the thief down a lot.

Alarms and Cameras

Consider installing a remotely monitored 24/7 alarm system that would detect intruders near the panels. Install cameras at various angles as a deterrent and to identify thieves. If you cannot install cameras, consider using "dummy cameras" as a cheaper alternative. Post signage around the area that warns people that they are being monitored by the cameras.

This Alliant Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.