

Silicon Energy Cascade Series Solar Panel Safety Alert

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the safety concern?

A: It's not clear how much danger Silicon Energy Cascade Series panels pose. In some cases, Silicon Energy panels have failed, and in some instances, have cracked or melted. This does not mean your panel will fail and/or result in a dangerous situation. It is best to speak with your solar installer who can talk with you more about inspecting the condition of your modules and help you decide if replacing them is the right course of action for you.

Q: How many solar panels have failed?

A: We do not have an exact number. What we do know is that more than 1,000 customers in the State of Washington have Silicon Energy panels. There have been issues reported to the Washington State University Extension Energy Program, and we felt the need to share this with our customers. Seattle City Light encourages all customers that have Silicon Energy Cascade Panels to speak with their solar installer and have their solar arrays inspected.

Q: Is there an investigation taking place?

A: Although City Light has limited information on the investigation, we know that the Intertek Testing Laboratory is investigating the issue. Specific information regarding the investigation will need to be requested through Intertek at <http://www.intertek.com>.

Q: What should I do?

A: Speak with your solar installer about the safety concerns. Your installer will be able to discuss safety implications and help you in deciding next steps. We do not advise you to get on your roof to assess the situation. You can also reach out to the Washington State Attorney General's office concerning filing a complaint. The AG consumer complaint center can be reached at (206) 464-6684 or you may file a complaint online at: <https://fortress.wa.gov/atg/formhandler/ago/ComplaintForm.aspx>.

You may also want to consult your home insurance carrier to alert them of the issue.

Q: Who is responsible?

A: Silicon Energy provides a five-year warranty for manufacturer's defects on its modules, and up until recently, it had been replacing defective modules for just the cost of shipping. Unfortunately, Silicon Energy now claims to be out of business in Washington and has stopped honoring warranty claims.

Q: Who will replace the defective panels?

A: Normally, your solar installer would be able to replace the defective modules and work with the manufacturer in acquiring replacement modules covered under warranty. However, we recently learned that the manufacturer is claiming to be out of business and is not providing warranty replacements. We recommend that you contact your solar installer and your home insurance carrier.

Q: Should I stop using my solar system?

A: The purpose of this communication is to inform you about the situation and offer you the information we have received. We encourage you to ask your solar installer to assist you in deciding whether to continue using your current system, to turn it off or replace it altogether.

Please be aware that, if you replace your system or components, you will need to re-certify that your system is eligible for the Washington State Renewable Energy Cost Recovery Program. For information regarding re-certification, please contact the Washington Department of Revenue at (360) 902-7003. Information can also be found online at www.dor.wa.gov.

Q: Why wasn't I warned about this safety concern at the time of my solar installation?

A: The problems were not apparent at the time your modules were installed. The modules were certified by Intertek, a national electric testing laboratory, to comply with national code requirements and underwent additional testing by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL). Installers and solar industry professionals believed that the modules were high quality and would last their expected lifetime of 30 years at the time of installation. This safety concern is just now coming to light, and we're informing you as soon as possible.

Q: Will other solar panels manufacturers have the same problem?

A: We are not aware of any issues or other safety concerns occurring with other manufacturers of solar panels now. The issue of delamination and diode failure appears to be unique to Silicon Energy Cascade panels.