



# Solar Evaluation Tool: Frequently Asked Questions

## Get Answers for HCR Solar Projects

### Learn About Solar's Technical Features

**Q: Is it sunny enough in New York for solar panels to make sense?**

A: Yes! New York has quite a bit of sun, and we have some of the highest electricity rates in the country. The combination of sun, incentives, and high rates make New York a great place to install solar panels.

**Q: Is solar technology mature?**

A: Solar technology is very reliable and most solar panels now come with a 25-year manufacturer warranty. While solar prices have dropped significantly in recent years, solar panel technology has stayed the same over time because it is so effective.

**Q. Do solar panels offset utility costs?**

A. There are two kinds of solar panels: solar thermal panels that capture the sun's heat and solar electric panels that produce electricity. HCR's Solar Evaluation Tool is for solar electric panels, which will only offset electricity usage. However, if a building has been electrified and the heating system is electric, then solar electric panels will help reduce heating costs.

**Q. Will solar panels keep producing power if there is a power outage?**

A. No, solar panels will be grid-tied, which means that if the grid goes down the solar panels will shut off automatically. This is a safety feature to protect the electrical workers who work on power lines during an outage to restore power.

**Q. Do solar panels have to be grid-tied?**

A. Some solar panels in New York use energy storage for backup power (i.e. batteries). All projects are recommended to assess their additional cost and permitting requirements to consider energy storage, which is outside the scope of HCR's Solar Evaluation Tool. In the future, this could change as cost and install barriers lift. Installing grid-tied solar now does not preclude energy storage in the future!

**Q. What happens when it snows? Will solar panels keep producing power?**

A. If solar panels are buried in snow, they will stop producing power until the snow melts away. However snow melts off of solar panels quickly because they are a smooth, dark surface that absorb the sun's heat. Because solar will produce more in the summer and less in the winter, any snow loss averages out over the course of the year.

**Q: How are the panels attached to the roof? Will it void any roof warranty?**

A: You can either use a ballasted array, where the panels sit on top of the roof and are weighed down to hold them in place, or a mechanically integrated system that attaches the array to the structure of the roof. Most roofing companies have a policy that will allow them to maintain their warranty after solar is installed as long as they can inspect and sign off on the installation. There are also solar arrays that can be installed without a roof, such as a ground-mounted systems or parking canopies.

**Q: Is there any maintenance recommended for the solar energy system?**

A: Solar energy systems require almost no maintenance since there are no moving pieces and the solar panels are warrantied for 25 years. However, HCR will require that installed systems have an operations and maintenance agreement in place after installation to ensure that the system is producing electricity as designed and is properly maintained.



## How to Get Started with an HCR Solar Project

**Q: What does HCR do with a Solar Evaluation Tool (SET)? How am I supposed to use it?**

A: The Solar Evaluation Tool (SET) helps assess a project's solar potential, projected electricity savings, and impacts to the project's underwriting. The Solar Evaluation Tool is a required component of your Financing Application. To access the Solar Evaluation Tool, [click here](#), and review the instructions at the start of the spreadsheet in Excel. Free assistance from HCR's Solar Technical Assistance Provider is available to HCR projects throughout the process.

**Q: Is solar required for HCR buildings?**

A: No, solar is not required! It is required to complete the Solar Evaluation Tool as part of HCR's updated Sustainability Guidelines. HCR strongly encourages installing solar where it makes financial sense because of its reliable technology, numerous incentives, and cost-saving potential.

**Q: How long does the solar process take once we say yes to an installer?**

A: The timeline varies between projects, but 6 months is a reasonable estimate, and 12 months for large projects with complex permitting requirements and construction factors.