Solar Automated Permit Processing (SolarAPP) Benefits

NREL is building an advanced online permitting portal
The SolarAPP is a collaborative effort to foster rooftop solar adoption by making it easier for local governments facing resource constraints from residential solar applications to quickly and safely approve most rooftop projects for installation.

Our first project is led by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), who is working with an all-star team of experts to build an online permitting platform that will automate rooftop solar plan review and produce compliant approvals instantly. Our team includes solar industry groups, cities and counties, code bodies, environmental organizations, government entities, and you. See the full list on our website at solarapp.nrel.gov

Online permitting saves tax dollars
Most residential solar systems are simple and standardized, like HVAC installations, but the sheer volume of applications can also be time and resource consuming. SolarAPP helps make this workload manageable by running compliance checks on incoming applications. SolarAPP also:

● Uses automated, standardized compliance checks to catch code issues, typos, and errors; returning corrections to the applicant instantly.
● Cookie-cutter applications get approved permits to build instantly, while the tougher projects flow through a typical permitting review. Stale applications never require action.
● Produces an inspection checklist replicating the application details for inspectors to utilize and confirm.

Piloting and Adopting is Easy

● Free for AHJs to use for plan review, approval, fee payments and record tracking
● Contractors pay small admin fees to support SolarAPP’s updates and availability
● Can stand alone or integrate with existing government software and inspection platforms
● Stays up to date with relevant code and certifications as new editions and technologies arise.
● Reduces the need to constantly retrain staff on new codes and instead rely on the SolarAPP’s guidance

Online permitting is already popular
Online and instant permitting is common practice for many localities in the US. We can work with an AHJ whether or not they are already online. We built on examples from Nevada, Florida, California, South Carolina, Texas, New York and more. Several jurisdictions across these states provide instant permits after installers enter full design and component details. Our system goes one step further by providing an inspection checklist to hold installers accountable to their approved application.

When rooftop solar installation hurdles are simplified effectively, customers are happier and adoption rates go up. In turn, local governments benefit from greater resilience, flexibility, and localized economic development.

Plan checkers are “being removed from more difficult jobs to do PV plan reviews,” he said. “If I could use the app to get through [PV plans each] month, that would be a great relief for my staff.” - Oceanside, CA

Join us by checking out our website and sharing your contact information through our interest questionnaire here or by reaching out to solarapp@nrel.gov