



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING SERVICES

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Building Policy 14. Solar Energy Systems Permit and Inspection

Previous Policies

This policy replaces and supersedes the following prior procedure:

- Building Procedure 02: Ground Mount Photovoltaic Permit & Inspection Checklist, February 16, 2023

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish uniform requirements for the permit submittal, plan review, and inspection of solar energy systems regulated by the Building Division. This policy ensures that solar energy systems are reviewed and inspected in a manner that:

- Protects public health and safety;
- Ensures compliance with applicable California building, electrical, and fire codes;
- Provides clarity and predictability for applicants, installers, and inspectors.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- **Ground-Mounted Photovoltaic (PV) System:** A solar energy system installed on the ground rather than on a structure, including associated mounting, electrical, and interconnection components.
- **PV Module:** A panel or assembly of photovoltaic cells that converts sunlight into electrical energy.
- **Grid-Connected System:** A PV system interconnected with a utility electrical grid.
- **Stand-Alone Solar Power System:** A PV system not interconnected with the utility grid and typically incorporating battery storage.
- **OCPD (Overcurrent Protection Device):** A device designed to protect electrical circuits from overcurrent conditions.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

1. Standardize permit submittal and plan review requirements for solar energy systems.
2. Ensure consistent inspection practices for PV installations.
3. Promote compliance with California Electrical Code (CEC) and Fire Code requirements.
4. Support efficient review and inspection workflows within the Building Division.

Authority

The authority for this policy is contained in:

- Mendocino County Code, Title 18 Chapter 18.40
- California Building Code (CBC), Chapter 15
- California Residential Code (CRC), Sections R329 & R330
- California Electrical Code (CEC), including Sections 690 and 705
- California Fire Code, as applicable

- California Wildland-Urban Interface Code, as applicable

Policy

1. Applicability

This policy applies to ground-mounted solar energy systems requiring Building Division permits and inspections within the County of Mendocino.

2. Permit Submittal Requirements

Applicants shall submit the following items for permit review:

1. A completed permit application, and
2. A completed site plan clearly identifying the proposed PV system location, and
3. Details of equipment labeling as required by applicable CEC sections.
4. A standard electrical plan for solar installations 10kW or smaller, when applicable.

If a standard electrical plan is not used, the applicant shall submit an electrical plan that includes:

- Location of main service or utility disconnect, and
- Total number of modules, number of modules per string, and total number of strings, and
- Make and model of inverter(s) and/or combiner boxes, and
- One-line electrical diagram, and
- Grounding and bonding details, and
- Conductor type, size, conduit type, conduit size, and number of conductors, and
- Identification of the system as grid-connected or stand-alone, and
- Battery storage details, if applicable, including location and venting, and
- Equipment cut sheets for inverters, modules, AC and DC disconnects, and combiner boxes.

3. Plan Review Considerations

During plan review, staff shall verify:

- System design consistency with submitted plans and equipment specifications
- Compliance with California Electrical Code and Fire Code requirements
- Proper identification of system configuration and safety components

A California-licensed engineer's approval is required for ground-mounted PV arrays exceeding seven (7) feet in height.

4. Inspection Requirements

At the time of each inspection, applicants shall be in compliance with the following:

4.1 Structural & Mounting

- PV module count and model match approved plans
- Maximum array height consistent with approved plans
- Foundation and footing details, including reinforcement
- Proper mounting and fastening per approved attachment details

4.2 Electrical Installation

- Conductors and components installed in a neat and workman-like manner
- Proper grounding of the PV array
- Electrical boxes accessible and rated for environmental exposure
- Conductor sizes and ratings consistent with approved plans

4.3 Labeling & Signage

Required signage shall be properly constructed, installed, and displayed, including:

- PV power source system attributes at the DC disconnect
- AC point of connection identification
- Identification of alternative power system disconnects

4.4 Equipment Ratings & Protection

Inspectors shall verify that:

- Inverter ratings meet or exceed maximum voltage identified on signage
- DC-side OCPDs are DC-rated and meet voltage requirements
- Switches and OCPDs are installed per manufacturer specifications
- Inverter AC output OCPDs are properly sized
- OCPD connected to the AC output of the inverter is rated at least 125% of maximum current on sign and is no larger than the maximum OCPD on the inverter listing label
- Combined main and inverter OCPDs do not exceed 120% of bus bar rating

5. Final Approval

Final approval shall be granted when all inspections are complete and the installation is verified to be compliant with approved plans, applicable codes, and this policy.

This policy is effective as of the date of the signatures below.

Policy Approved: 
Richard Angley, Chief Building Official

Date: 03-08-2026

Policy Approved: 
Julia Krog, Director

Date: 03-13-2026