



An Extended Guide · No. 1538

Choosing a Roof-Mount Solar Installer

How to vet the people
who'll drill your roof

Tech Made Simple — Service Made Personal

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! Read this first — this is professional, on-the-roof work

Putting solar on a roof is expert, permitted work — not a weekend project. It means drilling into your roof and sealing every hole against water for decades, or setting heavy ballast your roof has to carry, all while working at a height where a fall can be deadly and around wiring that is live whenever the sun is up. This guide is here to help you understand and judge that work — so you can hire the right people and ask good questions — not to walk you up a ladder to do it yourself. For any roof-mounted system, use a licensed, insured, properly credentialed solar installer, make sure the required permit and inspection actually happen, and protect your roof's warranty before the first hole is drilled. And please don't climb up to inspect or adjust anything yourself — the roof is their job, not yours. Here the installer you choose is the single biggest factor in whether all of that work — the drilling, the sealing, the wiring — gets done safely and done right.

The choice that matters most: who does the work

Every guide in this set explains what good roof-mounted solar looks like. This one is about the company you trust to actually deliver it.

I'm Bill, and I help families around Portage County, Ohio make sense of decisions like this one, without a stake in who you hire. Of everything covered in this whole set of guides, choosing your installer may matter the most — it's the decision that shapes every other outcome.

The good news is that vetting an installer doesn't take special expertise. It takes a checklist, a little patience, and a willingness to ask plain questions and expect plain answers. That's exactly what this guide gives you.

★ I have no stake in who you choose

I don't sell solar and I don't earn a commission from any installer. My only interest is helping you hire well. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 to talk it through.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things about choosing an installer, you're well ahead of most homeowners.

- ❑ Look for licensed (electrical), insured, and bonded — all three, not just one.
- ❑ NABCEP certification is the recognized credential to look for in solar installers.
- ❑ Manufacturer certifications and a real local track record are good signs too.
- ❑ Get a clear written proposal, not just a verbal promise.
- ❑ Permits should be pulled, and a workmanship warranty should be in writing.
- ❑ Beware high-pressure, door-to-door, or 'today-only' sales tactics.
- ❑ Get multiple quotes and compare them apples-to-apples before deciding.

✓ Read it in any order

This guide is meant to be dipped into. Skip to the section that matches where you are — just starting to look, or already holding a quote in hand.

Why the installer matters more than the panels

Panels themselves are fairly similar from one reputable maker to the next. What varies enormously is the skill of the crew putting them on your roof.

The real risk in roof-mounted solar isn't really the equipment — it's the roof penetrations, the flashing, the structural judgment, and the live wiring, all of which come down to the people doing the work. A great panel installed poorly is still a poor install.

That's why this guide spends its time on the installer, not the hardware. Getting this one choice right does more for a safe, leak-free, long-lasting system than any other decision you'll make.

✓ A helpful way to think about it

You're not really shopping for panels. You're hiring a roofing-and-electrical crew who happens to install panels. Vet them the way you'd vet any skilled trade doing work on your house.

Licensed, insured, and bonded — what each word means

These three words get used together so often they can blur into one. They're not the same thing, and each protects you differently.

- **Licensed.** The installer, or the electrician on their crew, holds the electrical license the work legally requires.
- **Insured.** They carry liability insurance, so if something goes wrong — damage to your home, an injury on site — you're not the one left holding the bill.
- **Bonded.** A bond is a financial guarantee that protects you if the company fails to complete the work or meet its obligations.

★ Ask to see the proof, not just hear the words

A trustworthy installer will happily show you current license, insurance, and bond information. Hesitation to produce it is worth noticing.

NABCEP — the credential worth knowing

You'll see this abbreviation on installer websites and proposals. Here's what it actually means.

NABCEP stands for the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners. It's the widely recognized certification for solar installers, awarded to individuals who've met its training and experience standards.

A NABCEP certification isn't the only sign of a good installer, and its absence alone doesn't rule one out — but seeing it is a genuine, meaningful point in an installer's favor, and it's fair to ask whether anyone on the crew holds it.

✓ Ask, don't just look for a logo

'Does anyone on your crew hold a NABCEP certification?' is a simple, direct question that tells you a lot about how seriously a company invests in its own training.

Manufacturer certifications: another good sign

Beyond NABCEP, some installers are specially certified by the makers of the equipment they install.

These manufacturer certifications typically mean the installer has been trained on that maker's products and installation requirements, and sometimes they unlock stronger warranty coverage on the equipment itself.

If keeping your roof's own warranty intact matters to you, it's also worth asking whether the installer is recognized by your roofing manufacturer — a related but separate certification that speaks to roof-specific training, not just solar equipment.

✓ Worth asking either way

'Are you certified by the equipment makers you're proposing, or recognized by my roofing manufacturer?' Both are fair, useful questions.

A local track record and real references

Credentials tell you what an installer is trained to do. A track record tells you whether they actually do it well.

Look for real local history

A company with a real history in your area — ideally one that's installed systems on roofs like yours, in Ohio weather, for more than a season or two — brings something no certification alone can: proof they've stuck around to stand behind their work.

Then actually call the references

Ask for references, and actually call them. A few honest questions — would you hire them again, did they handle problems well, was the crew respectful of your home — tell you far more than a star rating ever will.

✓ Local matters more than it might seem

A company that's been doing this work in Ohio for years understands our weather, our building departments, and our roofs — practical experience that's hard to substitute.

Getting a real, written proposal

A serious installer puts their plan on paper. A verbal promise is not a proposal.

A written proposal should describe the scope of the work in plain terms specific to your roof and your home — not a generic template. It should spell out what's included, who is responsible for permits, and what warranty comes with the work.

If you're only ever getting verbal reassurances, or a proposal that reads like it could apply to any house on the street, treat that as a signal to ask more questions before you sign anything.

★ Bring it to me if you're unsure

I'm glad to look over a written proposal with you and help you understand what's there — and what's missing. (330) 200-8042.

Permits: a non-negotiable

This one is simple, and it's worth saying plainly: a good installer pulls permits. Every time.

Rooftop solar normally requires a building permit and an electrical permit, and sometimes a structural review, followed by inspection. A permitted job means an independent set of eyes — your local building department — checks the work against code.

Our guide on permits, inspections, and interconnection covers this whole process in depth. For choosing an installer, the takeaway is simpler: ask directly who pulls the permits, and expect the answer to be 'we do, as part of the job.'

! An installer who wants to skip permits is a red flag

If anyone offers to install solar without pulling permits, to save time or money, treat it as a serious warning sign, not a convenience. Unpermitted work can cause real problems at resale or with an insurance claim.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

What you're looking for in an installer stays the same everywhere — but a few details shift with where you live.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, you'll typically have more installers competing for your job, which is good for getting multiple quotes but also means more sales pitches to sort through.

- More installers to choose from means more opportunity to compare — and more reason to insist on written proposals from each.
- An HOA, if you have one, may have its own rules about appearance or approval — ask whether the installer has worked with yours before.
- A compact lot and close neighbors can make crew professionalism and cleanup especially noticeable — ask references about this specifically.
- Suburban homes are usually asphalt shingle or a newer metal roof — ask whether the installer has real experience with your type.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, fewer installers may serve your area regularly, and you may be considering a barn or outbuilding roof alongside the house.

- Ask directly whether the installer has real experience with metal barn, pole-building, or ag-panel roofs, not just house roofs.
- A smaller pool of local installers makes references and track record even more important to check carefully.
- Longer travel distances for a crew are worth asking about, since they can affect both scheduling and responsiveness for service calls.
- If your water comes from a well, ask how the installer plans wire runs and reliability for that priority — see our guide on coordinating your roofer, installer, and electrician.

★ Not sure who serves your area well?

Rural families especially ask me who has a real, honest track record nearby. I keep an ear to the ground and I'm glad to share what I know. Call (330) 200-8042.

The workmanship warranty — get it in writing

Equipment warranties come from the manufacturer. The workmanship warranty comes from your installer, and it's just as important.

This is the installer's own promise to stand behind their installation — the flashing, the attachments, the wiring — for a stated period. It's your main protection if a leak or an issue traces back to how the system was installed rather than the equipment itself.

Ask for its length and its terms in writing before you sign anything, not as an afterthought after the work is done. Our roof-warranty guide covers how this interacts with your roof's own warranty too.

! Verbal promises don't hold up later

If a workmanship warranty isn't written down, it's not much of a warranty. Insist on seeing the actual terms before committing to any installer.

Red flag: high-pressure, door-to-door sales

Good installers don't need to catch you off guard on your own porch to earn your business.

A knock at the door with a same-day pitch, or a phone call pushing you to decide before you've had time to think, is a pattern worth taking seriously — not because every door-to-door salesperson is dishonest, but because pressure and rushed decisions don't mix well with a permitted, decades-long investment in your roof.

A patient, no-pressure conversation, on your schedule, is the standard to hold every installer to — whether they found you or you found them.

! It's always fine to say no and take your time

A legitimate installer will still be there next week. Anyone who implies otherwise is telling you something important about how they operate.

Red flag: 'today-only' pricing

A discount that vanishes if you don't sign on the spot is designed to short-circuit your good judgment, not to reward it.

A serious, well-run company can generally honor a quote for a reasonable period while you compare it against others — that's normal, expected practice for a purchase this size. Pressure to decide immediately, with a price that supposedly disappears tomorrow, is a sales tactic, not a real deadline.

The same goes for scare tactics about rebates or incentives vanishing any day now. It's fine to ask questions and verify claims like that on your own before treating them as a reason to rush.

! Slow down, on purpose

Any pitch that discourages you from taking time, getting a second opinion, or comparing quotes deserves extra scrutiny, not less.

Who's actually doing the work? Subcontracting, honestly

It's a fair and common question: is the company you're talking to the company that shows up on install day?

Heavy subcontracting — where the company that sells you the job hands most or all of the actual work to another crew — isn't automatically bad, but it does mean more people and more communication links between you and the work being done on your roof.

Ask plainly who will be on your roof, whether they're employees or subcontractors, and who is accountable if something goes wrong. Our guide on coordinating your roofer, installer, and electrician covers how multiple companies on one project should communicate.

✓ A confident answer is a good sign

A company proud of its crew will tell you plainly who's doing the work. Vagueness on this question is worth noticing.

Getting multiple quotes

One quote tells you what one company thinks. Multiple quotes tell you what's actually reasonable.

Comparing more than one proposal is one of the simplest, most effective things you can do as a homeowner — it surfaces differences in scope, warranty terms, and approach that a single quote alone would never reveal.

It also takes the pressure off any one conversation. When you know you have other options to compare, a pushy sales pitch loses its power, and a patient, honest installer tends to stand out by comparison.

★ I'm glad to help you gather them

If you're not sure how to get the process started, or want a second set of eyes once quotes come in, that's exactly what I help with. (330) 200-8042.

Comparing quotes apples-to-apples

Quotes can look very different on the surface while covering very different things underneath. Line them up carefully.

What to compare	What to look for
Scope of work	Written and specific to your roof, not generic
Permits	Named as the installer's responsibility
Workmanship warranty	Length and terms spelled out in writing
Credentials	License, insurance, and NABCEP or manufacturer certifications listed

✓ **The lowest number isn't always the best deal**

A cheaper quote that skips permits, cuts corners on flashing, or offers a thin warranty can cost far more later. Compare the whole picture, not just the price.

Questions that separate good installers from the rest

The way an installer answers these tells you as much as what they say.

Q: Can you walk me through your written proposal, line by line?

A good installer explains it patiently and plainly; a weak one gets vague or rushes past details.

Q: What happens if there's a problem after installation?

You want a clear answer pointing to their written workmanship warranty, not a shrug.

Q: Who pulls the permits, and can I see them once filed?

The answer should be a confident yes — permits are core to the job, not an extra.

Q: Can you give me two or three local references I can actually call?

Real installers have real references. Reluctance here is worth noticing.

★ Practice these with me first, if it helps

Some folks like to rehearse a conversation like this before having it for real. I'm happy to run through it with you. (330) 200-8042.

What a confident, trustworthy installer sounds like

Beyond any single answer, there's a pattern worth listening for across the whole conversation.

- **Patient with your questions.** Never rushed, never annoyed, even by the same question asked twice.
- **Specific to your home.** Talking about your roof, your shading, your situation — not a one-size-fits-all pitch.
- **Comfortable being compared.** Not threatened by the idea that you're getting other quotes too.
- **Consistent on paper.** What they say out loud matches what's written in the proposal, with nothing added verbally that isn't in writing.

✓ Trust the pattern, not one good moment

Any salesperson can have one great conversation. Consistency across several — the pitch, the proposal, the references — is what really tells you who you're dealing with.

Putting it all together before you sign

A short gut-check, right before you commit to anyone.

- ☐ Have you confirmed licensing, insurance, and bonding, and seen proof?
- ☐ Have you asked about NABCEP and manufacturer certifications?
- ☐ Have you checked a real local track record and actually called references?
- ☐ Do you have a written proposal specific to your home?
- ☐ Is it clear that permits are the installer's responsibility?
- ☐ Do you have the workmanship warranty's length and terms in writing?
- ☐ Have you compared multiple quotes apples-to-apples, without being rushed?

★ That's the whole checklist

If you can say yes to all of these, you're in a strong position to choose with confidence. If not, that's exactly where I can help before you sign anything.

Common Questions

The questions about choosing a roof-mount solar installer I hear most often, answered plainly.

Q: Is NABCEP certification required by law?

No, but it's a widely recognized, meaningful credential to look for — a genuine point in an installer's favor.

Q: How many quotes should I really get?

More than one. Comparing multiple written quotes apples-to-apples is one of the most effective things a homeowner can do.

Q: Is a lower price always a red flag?

Not automatically, but a big gap between quotes is worth understanding — ask what's different in scope, warranty, or materials before assuming it's a bargain.

Q: What if an installer pressures me to decide today?

Treat that as a signal, not a deal. A legitimate offer will still be there after you've had time to compare it.

Q: Does subcontracting mean I should walk away?

Not necessarily, but ask plainly who will actually be on your roof and who's accountable, and factor the answer into your decision.

Q: What's the single most important document to get?

A written proposal and a written workmanship warranty. Between the two, you have most of what you need to hold an installer accountable.

★ Still have a question I didn't cover?

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and ask — there's no such thing as a silly question about your own home.

Bringing it all together

Choosing an installer is the decision that shapes every other outcome in this whole process — and now you know exactly what to look for.

Licensed, insured, and bonded. NABCEP and manufacturer certifications. A real local track record and references you actually call. A written proposal, permits pulled, and a workmanship warranty in writing. Multiple quotes, compared honestly, with no pressure to rush.

None of this requires becoming an expert in solar or roofing. It requires patience, a short list of questions, and a willingness to walk away from any pitch that doesn't hold up to it.

★ I'm glad to be your second opinion

Whether you're comparing your first quotes or double-checking a proposal that's already on the table, that's exactly what I'm here for — no sales pressure, ever. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made choosing and vetting a roof-mount solar installer feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I don't climb on roofs or do the licensed solar, roofing, or electrical work myself — for that I'll help you line up a trustworthy, properly credentialed local pro.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

Vetting an Installer, Step by Step

A short, repeatable process for any installer you're considering



The same short process works for any installer you're considering.

Why Each Credential Matters

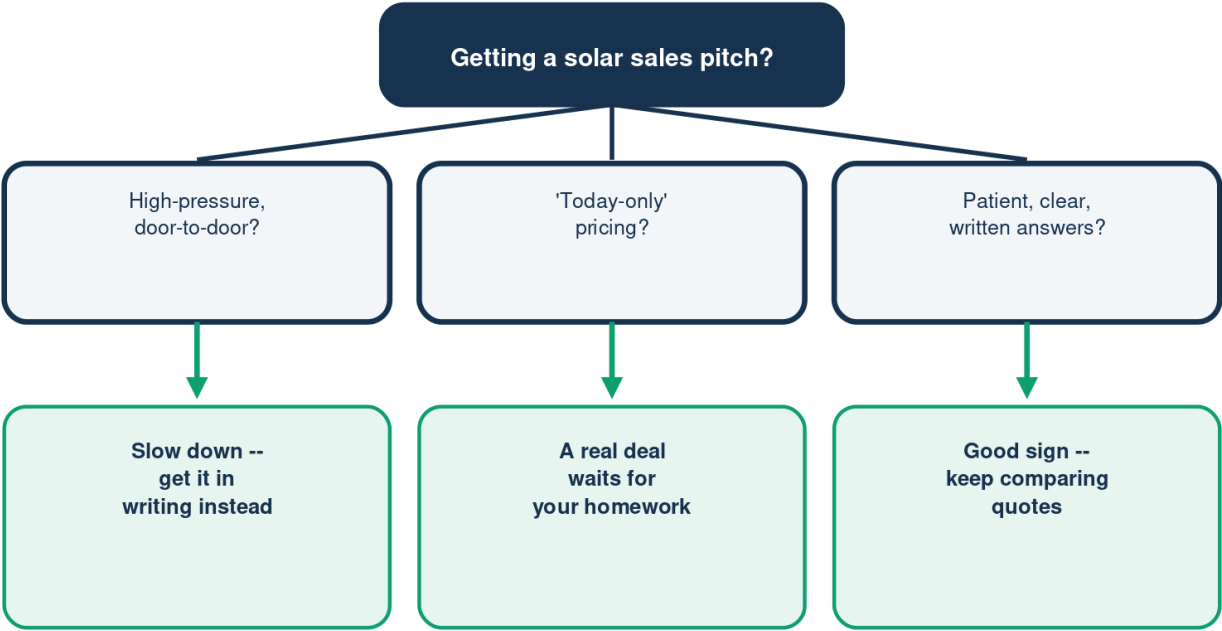
None alone guarantees a good job -- together, they add up

Why it matters	
Licensed and insured	Protects you if something goes
NABCEP certified	Recognized training
Local references	Proof of real local work
Written warranty	Your recourse if issues appear

You never need to verify these alone -- ask, and expect clear answers.

Sizing Up a Sales Pitch

A quick gut-check before you sign anything



A trustworthy installer never needs you to decide on the spot.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

Reassuring Signs vs. Red Flags

The pattern across a pitch tells you more than any one answer

	Reassuring sign	Red flag
Sales approach	Patient, clear answers	High-pressure, rushed
Pricing	Written estimate	'Today-only' discount
Proposal	Detailed and written	Verbal only
Crew	Named and accountable	Vague on who's coming

Trust the pattern, not any single answer.



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— Bill

Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

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