



Solar Permitting Wood County, WI

Installing a solar project in Wood County requires obtaining the necessary permits from the municipality the project is planned in, and possibly the County. Permits will vary depending on the municipality that the project is located in. Contacts for each municipality can be found at the following link to the Wood County Official Directory, 2019-2020.

<https://www.co.wood.wi.us/Departments/Clerk/Doc/WoodCountyDirectory2019.pdf>

Wood County is designated as SolSmart Gold for making it faster, easier and more affordable to go solar. Although County staff may not be involved with the review or permitting of Solar installations, they can answer many questions that applicants may have and direct any inquiries to the proper contacts or review authorities.

Contact Information for the Wood County Planning & Zoning Office:

Wood County Courthouse

Planning & Zoning Office, Room 217 A-B

400 Market St. – P.O. Box 8095

Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495-8095

Phone: 715-421-8466

Webpage: <https://www.co.wood.wi.us/Departments/PZ>

General Permitting and Inspection Process

- Installer must have the proper state licensing – this may include electrical, building or alternative energy licensing. In addition to licensing, it may be required for the contractor to provide proof of insurance prior to requesting a permit.
- Each municipality in Wood County has different regulations.
- Installer completes necessary building permit applications required by the municipality. Forms are available by contacting the building inspector in the municipality where the installation is planned. Fees for solar permitting vary by municipality.
- Some projects that are located in areas subject to shoreland zoning regulations (Wood County #704 Shoreland Zoning Ordinance) or floodplain zoning (Wood County #703 Floodplain Ordinance) should contact the Wood County Planning and Zoning Office at 715-421-8466. General information regarding shoreland and floodplain regulations can be found at the following link.

<https://www.co.wood.wi.us/Departments/PZ/Zoning.aspx>

- Upon project plan review and verification of all necessary application items a permit will be issued by the municipal building inspector. Necessary items for project plan review will vary by municipality, but generally include:
 - Completed Application
 - Site Plan
 - Electrical Line Drawing
 - Review and issuance of a solar power permit for systems less than 10kW varies by municipality.
- If any digging will occur as part of the solar project, Diggers Hotline should be contacted to locate any utilities a minimum of three days prior to starting the project. They can be contacted at 1-800-242-8511.
- Upon completion of the project a final inspection will be performed by the municipal building inspector. To schedule an appointment, please call the municipal building inspector. Ground mounted solar projects may require an interim inspection for footings.
- After completion, commissioning installer/responsible party must send a completed Distributed Generation (DG) Interconnection Agreement to the appropriate electric utility. Agreement form must be signed by the customer/owner. Forms may be found on the State's PSC website as well as the overview of PSC 119, which regulates interconnection. <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/ForUtilities/Energy/DistributedGenerationInterconnectionProcedure.aspx> The DG Application should be submitted in advance of project start. Contact the electric utility for an overview of the interconnection process.
- Installer makes commissioning appointment with a utility representative to obtain final power utility inspection and schedule change in meter before bi-directional unit. Installers do not pull meters.
- Project is commissioned and begins producing energy.

Best Practices

Here are some suggested practices that *may* help make solar easier, cheaper and safer:

- Submit Distributed Generation forms ahead of project completion to accelerate utility approvals.
- Minimize installer/contractor visits by planning ahead or coordinating same day inspections; such as with the municipality's final inspection and then the utility interconnection commissioning appointment.
- Have ready to sign at the final inspection, any required utility forms/electric inspection certificates.
- Per electric code, permanently and clearly label all required devices, including the AC Disconnect near the meter to improve visibility and safety.
- Always leave room for fire access, such as on the north roof slope to allow entry if there is a fire.
- Consider rooftop solar when getting a new roof. Have a feasibility study completed for both.

Solar Resources

Here are some solar resources that *may* be helpful in researching and learning more about solar:

- In an effort to promote sustainability and decrease energy costs, Wood County provides resources for residents who would like to pursue solar and wind energy generation. The following link provides a variety of resources on planning new installations, incentives and financing, solar and wind policies and laws, and the SolSmart Initiative.

<http://www.co.wood.wi.us/Departments/UWEX/RenewableEnergy.aspx>

- Wisconsin State Solar Access Rights. According to Wisconsin State law (60.61(2)(i)) an application for a permit will only be denied if; the denial is necessary to preserve or protect the health and safety, or an alternative system of comparable cost and efficiency would be permitted; and provided further that conditions may be imposed upon a permit if they:
 - Serve to preserve or protect public health or safety, or
 - Do not significantly increase the cost of the system or significantly decrease efficiency.
- Grow Solar. Grow Solar is a coordinated effort among Midwest organizations and municipalities to build an open and advantageous solar market that provides long-term benefits to communities.

<http://www.growsolar.org/power-pack/homeowners-small-businesses-farmers/>