

# Accreditation for Supply and Installation of Solar Water Heating Systems

The solar water heating accreditation scheme is established and administered by the solar water heating industry, represented by the Solar Industries Association (SIA). Accreditation is a means of providing guidance to members of the public wishing to ensure that they purchase solar water heating systems from suppliers who provide product that meet the relevant standards, and that are installed to best industry practice.

Accredited solar water heating system suppliers must use product for which distributors<sup>1</sup> have been able to demonstrate to potential customers and Building Consent Authorities that an installed system meets the requirements of the New Zealand Building Code. To assist the public identify those system that comply with the Building Code the Solar Industries Association has established a scheme where-by systems that have been demonstrated as complying are listed on a public access website. The Solar Industries Association (SIA) administers the scheme and lists packaged Complying Systems on the website [www.accreditedsolar.org.nz](http://www.accreditedsolar.org.nz).

The accredited suppliers and installers are themselves also listed on the website [www.accreditedsolar.org.nz](http://www.accreditedsolar.org.nz). The industry association recommends that the public only purchase systems from those accredited for supply and installation of solar water heating systems.

Verification of applications for accreditation is undertaken by an independent party so as to provide members of the public wishing to invest in solar water heating with a level of assurance that the supplier and their installers should install to best practice.

Listing on the website of those accredited for supply and installation also makes it easy for potential customers and consent authorities to check if suppliers have been independently vetted.

## 1. What is accreditation?

Solar water heating supply and installation accreditation is the industry adopted method of demonstrating that people who supply SWH systems have demonstrated knowledge, competency, and ability in solar water heating supply and installation to at least minimum industry installation standards. Accreditation helps ensure that good quality systems are properly installed so that they provide optimal energy performance.

The aims of the solar water heating accreditation scheme are to identify suppliers who:

1. have received appropriate training for supply and installation;

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<sup>1</sup> Distributor – manufacturer or importer of the system  
 Supplier – the party who sells the system to the customer. A supplier will usually also arrange to install the system as part of the supply contract.  
 Installer – the party who installs the system. The installer may be contracted to the supplier or an independent party. The installer may also be the supplier if part of a distributors network of agents.

2. provide a measure of competence for supply and installation;
3. use only products that comply to the standards and requirements of the New Zealand Building Code;
4. provide post installation support and are in a position to backup warranties.

Listing as being *Accredited for the Supply and Installation of Solar Water Heating Systems* does not provide any warranty to SWH system purchasers but is a guide to which suppliers are likely to specify appropriate systems that meet the appropriate standards, and install the system so that it provides optimal energy performance as specified by the supplier. Purchasers are advised that they need to assure themselves of the suitability of the system and the competence of the supplier when making their purchase as the system and individuals involved with supply and installation may be different from those considered at the time of vetting and listing.

Accreditation for Supply and Installation primarily covers residential or small commercial applications. It does not cover large scale or commercial applications however it will be a good guide as to the supplier's level of competence for those applications.

A party accredited for supply and installation undertakes to both sell and install. This provides the assurance to the purchaser that the system will be operating optimally to achieve maximised energy performance. Those parties who sell product directly to a customer and leave it to the purchaser to arrange their own installation are not covered by accreditation. This reflects the importance of correct specification of a system and its correct installation for optimal performance. If the supplier and installer are not contractually linked then there is a potential problem of who is accountable if the system does not operate optimally.

A supplier may be a distributor or a second party selling and arranging for the system to be installed using either their own Supplier Approved Installers or an external Independent Accredited Installer<sup>2</sup>.

A party holding supply and installation accreditation must use only a Complying SWH System and use only 'approved solar water heating installers' who have undertaken appropriate training and demonstrated competence in installation.

To gain accreditation an applicant must satisfy the SWH Accreditation Administrator that their products and installation procedures meet the New Zealand Building Code, the SIA Code of Practice, relevant New Zealand Standards, and staff, agents, or subcontractors meet an acceptable level of competence for the tasks undertaken. A copy of the operative version of the Code of Practice is available on the SIA website.

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<sup>2</sup> An installer may be approved by the Accredited Supplier as a Supplier Approved Installer, or they may be approved by the Accreditation Administrator as an Independent Accredited Installer. Regardless the supplier, as the party who contracts for the supply and installation of the system, is the party responsible to the customer for the optimal energy performance from the installation. An Independent Accredited Installer may be a specialist installer who becomes Accredited for the installation of any SWH system. They may often install more than one brand of system. A Supplier Approved Installer or an Independent Accredited Installer will generally be contracted to install the system sold by the supplier to the customer. An installer will generally not have a contractual relationship with the customer but only with the supplier.

Every accredited supplier must maintain an appropriate cover under a public liability insurance scheme. Suppliers must also have an Approved or Independent Accredited Installer(s) available to deal with customer's technical queries.

Accredited parties may publicise their accreditation by use of the SIA accreditation logo on publicity material accompanied by the following relevant label:



Accreditation can be obtained by a person or company but must cover both system supply, and installation<sup>3</sup> of the system using only Supplier Approved or Independent Accredited Installers.

## ***2. Who provides accreditation***

Accreditation is independently administered by an SWH Accreditation Administrator who is currently the SIA Executive Officer to criteria approved by the industry represented by Full Members of the SIA. Oversight of the actions of the SWH Accreditation Administrator is provided through the establishment of an external and independent Accreditation Complaints Committee.

For further information contact

The SWH Accreditation Administrator  
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Wellington 6142  
or  
Email: [brian.cox@solarindustries.org.nz](mailto:brian.cox@solarindustries.org.nz)  
DDI: 04 385 3359  
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## ***3. What is a complying solar water heating system***

Distributors, whether importers or New Zealand based manufacturers<sup>4</sup>, of SWH equipment are required to demonstrate that the equipment supplied meets the manufacturing and operating standards in the New Zealand Building Code.

The scheme for listing of complying SWH systems covers solar water heating systems manufactured locally or imported into New Zealand. Complying Systems must comply with the relevant New Zealand manufacturing standards and the distributor must support the product with installation manuals appropriate for NZ applications, installer training, backup technical support for suppliers and installers, and the product must be covered by an appropriate warranty.

Listed systems are referred to as a 'Complying Solar Water Heating System' and are listed on the website [www.accreditedsolar.org.nz](http://www.accreditedsolar.org.nz).

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<sup>3</sup> A Supplier Approved Installer acting as an agent for an Accredited Supplier acts under the Accredited Supplier's accreditation (unless accredited under their own name) and may display the accreditation logo.

<sup>4</sup> In New Zealand the majority of systems available on the market are manufactured by the import of specific components and their integration to a design either prepared by the New Zealand based manufacturer or an overseas brand developer.

A Complying System must be a fully 'packaged system'. Packaged systems are where the entire system (collector, tank, piping, supplementary heating controller, pump, and pump controller) is designed as an integrated whole made up of the various components.

The Building Code and associated standards allow for components from a packaged system to be used in a custom built application. Custom built systems might use various components connected to an existing hot water storage tank, or have a collector inset into a roof.

Only packaged complying systems are able to be energy performance rated and thus listed, as by its nature a custom built system is defined only once it is built and may be different in a number of aspects from other systems.

In terms of the Building Code the standard AS/NZS 2712:2007 determines that if a custom built system is made up of components from a complying packaged system, and the ratio of collector area to tank volume is greater than 50 litres/m<sup>2</sup>, then the custom built system is deemed to comply with the standard.

#### ***4. Benefits of purchasing from an accredited supplier***

Accreditation is a measure of competence that the supplier will specify, install and set up for optimal energy performance the appropriate system for the application in question. The measure of competence is made by an independent part and an industry established benchmark for quality products, installation, and business practices that meet best practice standards.

Accreditation also provides customers with confidence that the product they purchase is supplied and installed to the appropriate standards, that the installers are capable and have been trained appropriately, and that the company they purchase from has a proven track record.

The benefits of the accreditation process that will flow on to the customer include:

- ✓ Differentiation of quality suppliers and their product from those of poor quality
- ✓ The assurance to customers of the continued quality of services and products provided, leading to improved customer relationships
- ✓ The use of trained, experienced, and competent solar water heating system suppliers and installers
- ✓ The reliability of the system, the supplier, and the installers used
- ✓ Certainty that they are buying from the best
- ✓ That the energy performance of the system is reliable
- ✓ Confidence provided by the independent vetting that the scheme provides.

#### ***5. Disputes and complaints***

Any customer who considers their installed system is not working as specified in their contract with an Accredited Supplier may contact the Executive Officer of the Solar Industries Association. For further information on your consumer rights and the complaints process see SIA Information Sheet 4 on the website.