

# Choosing a Wind Contractor

## 3 Steps to Help You Choose a Contractor for a Residential Wind Energy System

Done properly, a renewable energy system can work well and pay for itself over time. But the technology is complex and, as with all complex systems, there are pitfalls. In addition to technical issues, there is the issue of choosing a contractor who is knowledgeable and trustworthy. Taking the time to educate yourself and carefully choose your contractor can help avoid a painful experience.

### 1 HIRE ONLY LICENSED CONTRACTORS

A licensed Nevada contractor with the proper classification is required to perform solar installations. If you have questions relative to license requirements, contact the Nevada State Contractors Board ("NSCB").

Ask for your contractor's license number and verify with the NSCB that the license is active and proper for the work to be completed. Visit [www.nscb.nv.gov](http://www.nscb.nv.gov) to verify or call (775) 688-1141 or (702) 486-1100.

### 2 BEWARE OF SCAMS

The NSCB urges consumers to be wary and watch for these red flags:

- Door-to-door solicitations
- Requests for verbal agreements
- High pressure sales tactics
- Demands for cash
- Scare tactics
- Demands for large down payments (the NSCB suggests no more than a 10% down payment)

Visit the NSCB online at [www.nscb.nv.gov](http://www.nscb.nv.gov) for more information on protecting yourself from scams.

### 3 DO YOUR HOMEWORK AND ASK QUESTIONS

Do your homework about the system you would like to install so that when you meet with a contractor you know what to ask.



#### **Q: Do zoning codes allow a wind turbine on my property?**

This question is perhaps the most important. Several Nevada counties and cities have restrictions that may prohibit you from installing a wind turbine on your property, particularly acreage. Contact your local planning department to find out if there are restrictions.

#### **Q: Is my property a good site for a wind turbine?** Some things to consider:

- Measure the wind speed at your residence every day for one year to make sure there's enough wind to justify the cost of installing the wind turbine.
- Your turbine needs to be sited upwind of any buildings and trees and be 30 feet above anything within 300 feet.
- Site your wind turbine on the top of or on the windy side of a hill for better access to prevailing winds.



The Public Utilities Commission of Nevada ("PUCN") oversees the administration of renewable energy incentive programs in Nevada. In order to ensure the programs result in the installation of quality systems, the PUCN has provided this information to help you select a contractor for the installation of your wind energy system. The PUCN does not regulate contractors.

- Consider existing obstacles, such as geological formations, trees and buildings.
- Plan for future obstructions, such as new buildings and trees that have not reached their full height.

**Q: Where can I find a contractor?** There are a number of ways to find a contractor for a wind turbine installation: the Internet, yellow pages or referrals from family and friends. Verify with the NSCB that the contractors have the appropriate license to do the job and get multiple bids before deciding on one.

**Q: Does the contractor have references?** Ask the contractor for contact information for three recent customers. Contact those customers directly and ask if they were satisfied with the work performed. A contractor who does quality work will be happy to provide references. Check for consumer reviews online and contact the NSCB and the Better Business Bureau (BBB) to see if there are complaints against the contractor. Contact the BBB in Northern Nevada at [www.reno.bbb.org](http://www.reno.bbb.org) or (775) 322-0657, and in Southern Nevada at [www.southernnevada.bbb.org](http://www.southernnevada.bbb.org) or (702) 320-4500.

**Q: How much will the installation cost?** The NSCB encourages contractors to provide written proposals that include the contractor's name, license number and a detailed cost estimate that includes labor, materials, equipment, overhead and profit so that you know the total cost up front.

**Q: What's in the contract?** Read the proposed contract in its entirety. Make sure it reflects what you understand the agreement to be. If the contractor does not provide clear and direct answers to your questions, don't sign. If you have a legal cooling off period after signing, do more investigation on the contractor and the products the contractor intends to use. If you have the option, don't be afraid to cancel the contract if you dislike the answers you get.

**Q: How long will the job take?** The time it takes to build a project varies with the size of the project, the number of turbines, and other factors, such as building and zoning permit requirements.

**Q: Is a rebate available?** Call NV Energy at (866) 786-3823 or visit [www.nvenergy.com](http://www.nvenergy.com) to investigate.

**Q: How much energy will the turbine produce annually?** Visit [www.windpoweringamerica.gov](http://www.windpoweringamerica.gov) for information.



**Q: What size wind turbine will work best for me?** Wind turbine manufacturers can help you size your system based on your electricity needs and the specifics of local wind patterns. A manufacturer can provide you with the estimated annual energy output of a turbine as a function of annual average wind speed.

**Q: Is maintenance required?**

Wind turbines typically are sturdy and reliable, but may require some annual maintenance.

- Check and tighten bolts and electrical connections.
- Check machines for corrosion and guy wires for proper tension.
- Replace worn leading edge tape on the turbine blades, if appropriate.
- Replace the turbine blades and/or bearings after 10 years, if needed.

If you do not have the expertise to maintain the system, your installer may provide a service and maintenance program.

**Q: Is there a warranty?** Make sure you understand warranty details and how to apply for a repair or replacement on all equipment.

#### **NORTHERN NEVADA**

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