Essential Handout

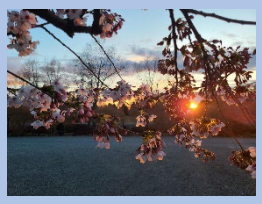
Renewable Energy Systems (Solar and Wind)

#16

Revised March 2026

SKAGITCOUNTYWA.GOV

Skagit County
Planning and Development Services



Visit us at:

1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA
98273

360-416-1320



This information only applies to property within unincorporated Skagit County and does not apply to property within incorporated city limits.

Skagit County encourages renewable energy systems such as solar panels or wind turbines, but they may be subject to certain constraints.

Can I install solar photovoltaics?

Skagit County allows photovoltaic solar systems (solar panels that generate electricity) that are not attached to the regional electrical grid and are accessory to residential uses in all zones.

Skagit County allows "net metering" photovoltaic solar systems that are attached to the grid without special land use approval in all zones when the system:

- Has an electrical generating capacity of not more than 100 kilowatts.
- Is located on the customer-generator's premises.
- Operates in parallel with the electric utility's transmission and distribution facilities; and
- It is intended primarily to offset part or all of the customer generator's requirements for electricity.

Standalone installations (e.g., solar farms) require special use permits.

When is a building permit required?

A building permit is required for the following solar energy systems.

- Solar system is associated with commercial or industrial applications.
- The solar system is a ground array and not on a rooftop.
- The solar system is part of building alterations or additions, valued over $2,500 (not including the value of the solar equipment).
- The solar system is associated with a power wall or other battery charging storage and/or charging system.

When is a building permit <u>not</u> required?

A building permit is not required when all the following conditions are true:

- The system is designed and proposed for the rooftop of a single-family residence.
- The system is designed for the wind speed of the local area and installed per the manufacturer's specifications.
- The system does not serve as roof covering.

This information is intended only as an informational guide. This information may not be complete and is subject to change. For complete legal information, refer to Skagit County Code.

- The panels are mounted no higher than 18" above the surface of the roofing to which they will be attached.
- Except for flat roofs, no portion of the system may exceed the highest point of the roof.
- The total dead load of modules, supports, mountings, raceways, and all other appurtenances weighs no more than 4 pounds per square foot.
- Roof top supports that are installed do not exceed a point load of 50 pounds on a single structural member.
- The method and type of attachment to the roof and weatherproofing for roof penetrations is completed to manufacturer recommendations.
- Fire access is provided around permitter and leading edge of the roof.

Even when a building permit is not required, the work must comply with the building codes and land use regulations, including permitted uses, setbacks, and height.

Can I install a solar hot water system?

Yes, a residential alteration permit is required to install a solar hot water system.

Is the installation of a wind turbine power generation system allowed?

Yes, Skagit County considers wind turbine energy systems that qualify as “net metering systems” (see definition under Solar Photovoltaics) to be accessories to residential uses.

- Provide a wind overlay study that demonstrates practical use.
- The location setbacks shall meet 1.5 times the distance from habitable structures.
- The energy system should not exceed 100kw.
- Shall satisfy sound limits of the zoning district it is located in.
- Shall provide studies and mitigation for wildlife.
- Shall adhere to FAA height regulation and local airport protection zones.

Those that don’t qualify as a “net metering system” may qualify as a major or minor “utility development” that is allowed per special use permit in most zones. A building permit and SEPA review is required for all wind turbine installations.

Are meteorological towers allowed?

Yes.

- Meteorological towers are not associated with renewable energy systems, thus allowed in all zones.
- Towers shall adhere to FAA height regulation and local airport protection zones.

Don’t forget an electrical permit!

An electrical permit is required for any renewable energy electrical generation system. Electrical permits are issued by Washington State Labor and Industries. Contact Labor and Industries: 360-416-3000 or www.lni.wa.gov.

How do I apply for a permit?

Apply using the Residential or Commercial Accessory Structure through the online portal: Civic Access Portal

Who should I contact if I have questions?

You may contact us if you have any questions via:

Online: Ask a Permit Tech

Remember, asking questions first can save lots of headaches, heartaches, and money!