

News Release



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MAKING THE RIGHT SOLAR HEATING DECISION – THE HEATING HELPLINE ISSUES EXPERT ADVICE TO HOMEOWNERS

The Heating Helpline issues expert advice to homeowners thinking about getting solar hot water panels fitted – with guidance on how they can steer well clear of the rip-off tactics of the thousands of 'solar cowboys' operating in the UK.

25 February 2013 – With the huge rises in household energy bills over the last three years, homeowners have been seeking ways to cut this worryingly high expenditure and rogue traders have been all too ready to exploit this situation with a hard sell for solar heating systems; making exaggerated claims about their benefits and how much money the homeowner will save. Just to make matters worse, once fitted far too many homeowners have had to resort to the courts to try to get their

money back as thousands of these installations were not done correctly, with bad and sometimes dangerous workmanship.

Blane Judd, Chief Executive of B&ES, the Building & Engineering Services Association, who operate the free consumer advice service the Heating Helpline, comments, "Fitting solar heating systems that operate to peak efficiency is a skilled exercise and beyond the expertise of most of these 'solar cowboys'. Regrettably there are far too many 'rip off' rogue solar heating installers operating in the UK; unscrupulous companies that have jumped on the renewable energies bandwagon".

To help homeowners thinking about getting solar hot water panels fitted make the right decision, the Heating Helpline has just issued these top tips:

- Ensure that the installer you choose is registered with the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS). MCS is an industry-led and internationally recognised quality assurance scheme, supported by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). All MCS members are closely vetted by the scheme operator to ensure high quality installations and good business practice. Importantly, only MCS installations will qualify for local and Government grants.
- Look at the installations these companies have carried out. Ask if they are willing to let you speak to one of their customers.
- Ask about warranties on the solar modules specified – system warranties may vary.
- Ask about the guarantees of the work carried out by the installer.
- Discuss and ensure you have enough space for the installation. For a correctly installed, fully efficient system there is a lot of

equipment involved, such as an expansion vessel, pumping station, controls and modules.

- Discuss the after sales service and ensure you will be given a demonstration of the system and a handover pack.

Blane Judd adds, "Using competent MCS registered installers will ensure you get quality workmanship and that the installation meets all the relevant requirements of the Building Regulations; a warrantee that actually means something together with the best energy efficiency from your new solar installation.

"The simplest way of locating a competent installer is to use the MCS website at www.microgenerationcertification.org. By employing the services of an MCS member, homeowners can have complete confidence that listed businesses are competent, have the right insurances and qualifications and that their work is regularly inspected.

For more information visit the Heating Helpline website at: www.heatinghelpline.org.uk.

Ends

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Notes to editors

Since its formation in 1904, B&ES, the Building & Engineering Services Association (formerly the HVCA) has represented the interests of companies engaged in a wide range of building and engineering services including domestic heating and renewable technologies.

B&ES members are subject to regular, third-party inspection and assessment of their technical competence and commercial capability, carried out by an independent certification body at least every three years.

B&ES members who undertake gas installations are registered with Gas Safe – the gas safety watchdog body – and are also members of TrustMark, the Government-endorsed scheme designed to direct customers towards reliable tradespeople.

B&ES operates the *Heating Helpline* (www.heatinghelpline.org.uk) to provide consumers with free, impartial advice on every aspect of home heating.