

Solar Tool Hits Sweet Spot

The SunEye, a solar-access and shade analysis tool from Solmetric, is really easy to use. It is so simple that you don't even have to adjust the compass for magnetic north, as you do with other units to ensure accurate orientation. First, simply use the built-in compass and orient the unit south. The SunEye lets the user select a city near the location where the site survey is being taken and automatically adjusts for it. Then, take a snapshot with the unit's fisheye lens and digital camera. The snapshot is then run through the software and instantly produces a report giving the available sunshine, and what the shading effects from trees or buildings will be.

The snapshot lets the user instantly identify the best place on a roof to install the system. Because the SunEye is digital, in a matter of minutes the solar installer can take readings of various other locations that a client might think are preferable and have the results just as quickly.

The unit has a built-in editing program so the solar installer can erase the shading effects of, for example, a tree and then show the client what the result of trimming that tree would be. All readings can be downloaded to the Solmetric software on a laptop computer, and the reports can be sent via e-mail or printed.

Being able to take multiple site surveys and generate the results on the spot is really a huge improvement for the solar industry, because it minimizes the mistakes that installers often make in the field when taking measurements. This instrument also greatly cuts time spent in the field, since the solar installer can complete most of the field reporting before he or she goes back to the office.

This instrument will produce the readings needed to meet the



new requirements for the California Solar Initiative for actual production estimates and will ensure that the solar industry doesn't suffer the same fate that it did in the '70s with solar hot water systems. Poorly designed systems and underperformance have always been the bane of the solar industry. Finally we have a tool for field measurement that ensures accurate site appraisals. Giving our clients a realistic expectation of what their solar-electric systems will produce is something the industry has needed for a long time.

—Richard O'Connell

Richard O'Connell is the owner of the O'Connell Solar Company, which is based in Santa Rosa, California.

For more information:

To learn more about the SunEye, visit www.solmetric.com.

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