

New Zealand Solar PV Installer Sales Reference Guide

Navigating Building Consent vs. Code Compliance & Assisting Property Owners to Achieve Structural Safety

Key Sales Objective: Help property owners understand that while council **Building Consent** may be waived under Schedule 1 exemptions, **Building Code Compliance** remains mandatory under NZ law. Use this guide during sales discussions to establish legal responsibility boundaries early, protect your installation business from taking on unverified building liability, and offer turnkey solutions to assist building owners in achieving compliance.

1. The Core Paradigm: Building Consent vs. Building Code Compliance

A primary source of confusion for property owners is the difference between council consent paperwork and physical code compliance. Solar installers must clearly communicate these two distinct legal pillars during customer interactions:

Regulatory Dimension	Building Consent (Administrative Pathway)	Building Code Compliance (Physical Standard)
What is it?	Formal administrative permission from local council to perform building work.	Mandatory national performance standards for structural safety, durability, and weathertightness.
Is it required for solar?	No, in many cases. Schedule 1 exemptions (e.g., 28D for roof arrays <40m ² in High Wind ≤44m/s) allow low-risk installs without consent.	Yes, ALWAYS mandatory. Under Section 17 of the Building Act 2004, all building work must comply with the Building Code—no exceptions.
Governance & Act	Administered by Local City/District Councils (Territorial Authorities) under Building Act Schedule 1.	Central Government standard (MBIE) enforced via Section 17 & Clause B1 (Structure), B2 (Durability), E2 (Weathertightness).
Key Takeaway for Owners	An exemption waives council paperwork and delays—it does <i>not</i> mean the install is unregulated.	Being exempt from council consent is never an exemption from complying with the Building Code.

2. Statutory Chain of Custody (Legal Allocation of Responsibility)

To protect your business from legal exposure, sales discussions must correctly position the statutory roles defined in the Building Act 2004:

Role & Party	Statutory Basis	Legal Scope & Statutory Responsibilities	Liability Boundary
Building / Property Owner	Building Act 2004 Section 14B	Holds ultimate legal responsibility for ensuring that all building work on their property complies with the Building Code and for obtaining consents where required.	Responsible for the overall structural integrity, framing capacity, and condition of their building roof.
Solar PV Installer	Building Act 2004 Sections 14E & 17	Legally responsible for ensuring the executed building work complies with the Building Code, selecting verified structural fixings, and following code-compliant installation methods.	Responsible for array mounting hardware, fixing points, and quality execution— not unverified roof framing.
Chartered Professional Engineer (CPEng)	Schedule 1 Clause 48 / 48A	Acts as technical validator. Designs or reviews structural fixings for arrays >40m ² or wind speeds >44 m/s to verify load paths and enable consent exemption.	Provides independent engineering verification to validate fixing loads and structural safety.

3. Assisting Building Owners to Achieve Building Code Compliance

While Section 14B places ultimate responsibility for the building structure on the owner, solar installers can add immense value and win trust by offering structured pathways to help owners fulfill their compliance duties seamlessly. The installer can present the following options during the sales process:

Compliance Pathway	How It Works & Role Division	Installer Action & Deliverable	Value to Building Owner
1. Dual-Engineer Collaboration (Site-Specific Array Certificate)	The Solar Installer provides a Site Specific PV Array Certificate detailing exact fixing loads imposed on the roof. The Building Owner engages a structural engineer to review building capacity using these nominated fixing loads.	Installer issues a site-specific array certificate specifying fixing reactions, spacing, and uplift forces to the owner's engineer.	Allows owner's structural consultant to complete building sign-off using precise solar load data.
2. Specialist Solar Structural Assessment	A specialist solar structural engineer completes a comprehensive Structural Roof Assessment determining building load capacity (dead weight, wind, snow, seismic). The installer uses this report to design the PV array layout.	Installer receives engineer's roof capacity report and tailors panel layout, rail spacing, and array zoning accordingly.	Guarantees panel layout is designed strictly within verified roof load capacity before installation.
3. Turnkey Integration (Gamcorp Solar Ready Certification)	The Solar Installer offers to manage the structural assessment on behalf of the owner as a turnkey value-add by embedding Gamcorp's Solar Ready Certification directly into their commercial proposal.	Installer coordinates with Gamcorp directly, delivering a full building + array certificate as part of a seamless solar package.	Hassle-free, single-point solution for the owner; removes regulatory complexity and speeds up timelines.
4. Direct Owner Referral to Gamcorp	The Solar Installer refers the Building Owner directly to Gamcorp to conduct an independent Structural Roof Assessment prior to finalizing array contract details.	Installer introduces owner to Gamcorp for independent structural roof verification prior to contract execution.	Independent engineering clarity; protects owner's statutory duty and ensures complete peace of mind.

4. Practical Customer Talking Points for Sales Teams

Sales representatives should use these pre-formatted scripts when discussing regulatory compliance and structural assessments with prospective clients:

Scenario A: Customer asks, "Do we need a Building Consent for this solar system?"

Recommended Installer Script: "Under NZ Schedule 1 rules, most standard rooftop solar installations do not require a council building consent. However, while council paperwork is waived, **Building Code compliance is still 100% mandatory**. Under Section 14B of the Building Act, property owners hold legal responsibility for building compliance, while we as installers guarantee under Section 14E that our mounting systems and fixing methods strictly meet Code standards. To ensure your project is completely compliant without council delays, we can help facilitate a structural review to confirm your building's load capacity."

Scenario B: Customer asks, "Are you certifying that my roof framing can support solar?"

Recommended Installer Script: "Our engineering certificate certifies that our mounting hardware, rail spans, and fixing penetrations comply with Building Code Clause B1 for wind uplift and load transfer. Under NZ law, overall building capacity remains the property owner's responsibility. To assist you in fulfilling your Section 14B duty, we offer several easy options: we can provide a Site Specific PV Array Certificate with nominated fixing loads for your engineer, or we can include Gamcorp's turnkey Structural Roof Assessment directly in our proposal to handle everything for you."

5. Four-Step Sales Workflow & Compliance Checklist

Step 1: Exemption Boundary Check	Step 2: Customer Framing & Education	Step 3: Engineering Pathway Selection	Step 4: Certification & Handover
- Check array area (<40m² vs >40m²). - Verify site wind speed (≤44m/s vs >44m/s) via BRANZ Maps. - Confirm Schedule 1 exemption eligibility.	- Explain Consent vs. Code distinction. - Outline Section 14B (Owner) & Section 14E (Installer) roles. - Reassure owner on code compliance.	- Present compliance pathways. - Offer turnkey Gamcorp Solar Ready Certification or dual-engineer collaboration. - Embed assessment into proposal.	- Issue Site Specific PV Array Certificate. - Provide structural roof assessment documentation. - Supply handover pack for owner insurance records.

Important Disclaimer: This guide is provided for educational and sales workflow guidance for New Zealand solar installers. It does not replace site-specific legal or structural engineering advice. All installations must adhere to the New Zealand Building Code and relevant standards including AS/NZS 1170.2 and NZS 3604.