



## Media Release

Thursday, 21 March 2024

### Victorian agencies join forces to improve heat pump hot water systems compliance

Victorian regulators and agencies have joined forces to improve compliance of heat pump hot water systems installations across the state, in line with industry and safety standards.

This follows the rapid growth in heat pump hot water system installations across Victoria under the Solar Homes and Victorian Energy Upgrades programs, which offer incentives to install energy efficient products in Victorian homes and businesses.

In the coming months, Solar Victoria, the Essential Services Commission, the Victorian Building Authority, Energy Safe Victoria and WorkSafe Victoria will increase site inspections and audits to ensure heat pump hot water systems are being installed safely and without fault. We will also engage with industry and provide updated resources to support compliance.

Common issues identified across agencies relate to inadequate installations, which can ultimately impact the effectiveness or safe functioning of the system. Compliance issues identified in audits include:

- inadequate insulation to protect systems from freezing,
- switchboard wiring,
- unsafe termination points for pressure relief valves, and
- inappropriately secured water tanks.

As part of Solar Victoria's commitment to safety and quality, five per cent of all Solar Homes Program installations are audited every year. While very few hot water installations audited by Solar Victoria over the last 12 months were found to be unsafe, there are still persistent issues being detected.

As the regulator and administrator of the Victorian Energy Upgrades program, the Essential Services Commission actively supports and monitors compliance of heat pump hot water systems installed under the program, including industry education and engagement, undertaking audits and investigations, and taking enforcement action when the program rules are not followed.

As Victoria's building and plumbing regulator, the Victorian Building Authority will audit completed work and use information from partner agencies and consumers to target installers who may be doing the wrong thing.

The Victorian Government provides a wide range of support to installers and retailers to assist in maintaining safety standards, to help customers identify reputable, government-approved suppliers.

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The Victorian Building Authority will continue to provide technical education, through seminars and bulletins, to improve practitioner understanding and competency of how to install hot water systems compliantly.

The Essential Services Commission and Solar Victoria will continue working with industry groups and representatives on education, guidance, and standards. Installers can download the Solar Victoria hot water audit checklist and installation guidance to help maintain safety standards. Visit [solar.vic.gov.au/hot-water-audit-checklist](https://solar.vic.gov.au/hot-water-audit-checklist).

**Quotes attributable to Solar Victoria Chief Executive Officer, Stan Krpan:**

*“More than 20,000 hot water systems have been installed across Victoria through our successful Solar Homes Program. Over the past 12 months, demand for Solar Victoria’s hot water system rebates has grown by 500%.*

*“While we are excited by the uptake and interest in hot water systems across the state, we need to ensure that every customer is receiving products that are fit-for-purpose and correctly installed. Confidence in heat pumps as a newer technology and in this growing industry will require a collective effort to ensure safety, quality and standards are maintained. Solar Victoria continues to monitor installers and retailers as part of our safety and quality commitment to our customers, and non-compliance will result in direction and warning notices, followed by removal or suspension from our program.”*

**Quotes attributable to Essential Services Commission Chairperson and Commissioner, Kate Symons:**

*“The Commission is committed to working with industry and partner agencies to improve compliance of heat pump hot water system installations in the Victorian Energy Upgrades program. We actively monitor compliance of installations and will not hesitate to act to protect consumers and the integrity of the program. This may include restricting businesses from participating in the program; refusing to register or requiring the surrender of certificates for upgrades; court enforceable undertakings and litigation; penalty notices; and referring matters to partner agencies.”*

**Quotes attributable to Victorian Building Authority Chief Operations Officer, Ann King:**

*“Incorrect installation of hot water systems can have devastating consequences for consumers. The Victorian Building Authority is committed to reducing harm caused by non-compliant plumbing work to keep Victorians safe.”*

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