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# ARRAY AFLAME

Viewing a PV system fire test at Underwriters Laboratories

**"If a roof with installed PV modules is exposed to a fire, will the solar array help or hinder the flames?"**

Until now, solar installers were left with less-than-perfect answers for this question. They could talk about how well a solar module responded to fire. They could talk about the flame-resistant properties of a mounting system. But none could cite laboratory tests for how a combined system—panels and mounting together—might respond to a building fire. The subject has received attention recently due to a few high-profile fires involving solar.

Solar mounting systems are diverse in material and structure. They can change the way a rooftop fire burns. Research by UL, in collaboration with the Solar ABCs, confirmed the fire performance of a module alone is not a good indicator of the fire performance of a whole system.

According to new language in the 2012 International Building Code, a solar PV system must be fire-rated at the same level or better than what is required for the building. So if a building is required to have a roofing system rated Class A for fire, then the solar system—modules and mounting rack together—should have the same certification.