Monocrystalline solar panels for home

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Solar energy, once a sideline to carbon-based energy sources, is rapidly proliferating and is powering more homes than ever. Of the estimated 3 million solar installations across the country, one-third were built just in the last couple of years – with searches for the best solar companies increasing yearly.

So it pays to scrutinize all aspects of your solar energy system, especially the choice between monocrystalline or polycrystalline solar panels. Efficiency, cost and durability hinge on your choice of the type of solar panel.

There are two types of solar panels: thermal and photovoltaic. Thermal solar panels concentrate sunlight to produce heat. Photovoltaic (PV) solar panels capture energy from the sun and convert it into electricity.

Photovoltaic solar panels are often favored by homeowners as the best solar panels for residential use. Though they are actually less efficient than solar thermal panels, they work better on a residential scale because they do not require large facilities.

A solar panel can be likened to a picture frame. It is rectangular; it has a metal frame around it and the front has protective glass. There are several layers to a solar panel, the most important of which is the layer that contains the matrix of solar cells.

Anywhere from 32 to 96 solar cells are arranged within each solar panel, with all of the cells wired together side to side and outputting anywhere from 230 to 275 watts of electricity.

The solar cells can either be monocrystalline or polycrystalline. Monocrystalline solar cells comprise the more premium panel since they more effectively harness the sun’s rays. But polycrystalline panels are less expensive and can be a good option for high sunlight areas.

Monocrystalline solar panels (or mono panels) are made from monocrystalline solar cells. Each cell is a slice of a single crystal of silicon that is grown expressly for the purpose of creating solar panels.

In the lab, the crystal is grown into a cylindrical log shape called an ingot and is then sliced into thin discs. Each disc is cut along the edges to form octagons.

Distinctive for their black color, monocrystalline solar panels typically have an efficiency range of between 15% to 20%, with some newer experimental models even reaching close to 50%.

Just like monocrystalline solar cells, polycrystalline solar cells are made from silicon crystals. The difference is that, instead of being extruded as a single pure ingot, the silicon crystal cools and fragments on its own. These fragments are melted in an oven and formed into cubes which are cut into thin wafers. So, many

different crystals form this amalgam, rather than the single crystal of the monocrystalline solar cell type. It’s a less exacting production process than with monocrystalline cells, so it allows for more solar cells to be produced faster and less expensively.

The blue-colored square polycrystalline cells fit neatly side by side, eliminating any empty space between the cells. Polycrystalline solar panels operate less efficiently than monocrystalline panels because the melted fragments of silicon afford less room for the electrons to move around.

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