**NEWS ARTICLE**

Fire safety measures for solar power systems

**21 February 2023:** Solar power systems for homes and businesses are increasingly popular to mitigate the impact of ongoing loadshedding. However, for insurance purposes these need to be installed by an accredited installer or electrician, highlights [ASP Fire](http://www.aspfire.co.za) CEO **Michael van Niekerk**. The onus is on home and business owners to ensure that the installation is correct, especially in terms of accompanying gensets.

“There are several fire safety measures that should be taken into account to prevent the risk of fires when installing a solar power system,” says van Niekerk. Firstly, solar panels must be installed by experienced professionals to prevent fires caused by faulty wiring or overheating.

It is important to use high-quality solar panels, inverters, wiring, batteries and other components from reputable manufacturers. “Inferior quality components, especially when it comes to lithium ion batteries, are more likely to malfunction, increasing the risk of a fire,” says van Niekerk.

Another critical consideration is using properly sized and rated wiring in the installation to prevent overheating, short circuits or other electrical problems that can lead to fires. Wiring should be insulated, and conduit used where necessary to protect the wiring from the elements. Battery storage rooms must be fire rated to control a battery fire as these are exceptionally difficult to control and extinguish.

A good safety measure to consider is installing an isolation switch to shut the roof-mounted solar panels down safely in case of an emergency. Such an isolation switch must be clearly labelled and easily accessible, adds van Niekerk. The impact that solar panels have on smoke ventilation and emergency firefighting smoke ventilation in a soft roof building are also important factors to keep in mind when designing solar panel installations.

In addition, a solar power system must be grounded to prevent electrical shocks and fires. All metal components, including the solar panels and storage batteries, must be grounded to a common ground point. Regular maintenance and inspection are critical to ensure all components function properly and to identify any potential fire hazards.

While back-up power supply such as gensets are in high demand during loadshedding, it is important that such important equipment also be maintained and serviced regularly. “Genset failure due to a lack of proper maintenance poses a significant business risk,” concludes van Niekerk.

**Pull quote**

“There are several fire safety measures that should be taken into account to prevent the risk of fires when installing a solar power system.” – **Michael van Niekerk**, CEO, ASP Fire

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**Notes to the Editor**
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**About ASP Fire**
ASP Fire operates across the entire African continent from its Gauteng base, providing professional, accredited fire risk management and support to its clients. ASP Fire designs, installs, and maintains a full range of fire detection and suppression equipment suited to clients’ needs. ASP Fire provides a holistic, proactive, and preventative fire solution based on integrated fire risk assessment, training, and consulting, with the installation and maintenance of fire detection and suppression systems that meet SABS, NFPA, FPASA, and SAQCC standards.

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