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An Act To Clarify the Qualifications of Installers under the Solar Energy Rebate Program

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, installers of solar energy systems have to take a course to be qualified to install solar energy systems; and

Whereas, current law requires that a licensed plumber sign off on the installation of a solar thermal water system that is installed by a qualified solar thermal water system installer before a person may receive a solar energy rebate; and

Whereas, it is necessary that the rules be amended as soon as possible so that solar thermal water systems that have been installed by qualified installers may be approved and rebates may be issued without having a licensed plumber sign off on the installation; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA §3211-C, sub-§1, ¶C, as reallocated by RR 2005, c. 1, §17, is amended to read:

C. "Solar thermal system" means ~~a configuration of solar collectors and a pump, heat exchanger and storage tank or fans designed to heat water or airspace heating system, a domestic water heating system or a space and domestic water heating system.~~ Solar thermal system types include forced circulation, integral collector storage, thermosyphon and self-pumping systems.

Sec. 2. Rules amended. The Public Utilities Commission shall amend its rules pertaining to the solar energy rebate program under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 35-A, section 3211-C.

1. The Public Utilities Commission shall amend the definition of "solar thermal system" to remove "configuration of solar collectors and a pump, heat exchanger and storage tank or fans designed to heat water or air" and insert "space heating system, domestic water heating system or a space and domestic water heating system."

2. The Public Utilities Commission shall amend the definition of "qualified solar thermal water system installer" by removing reference to "licensed plumber" and the necessary qualifications and replacing it with language requiring that a technician in good standing with the commission has successfully completed an approved solar thermal training course and carries a current license as a master plumber, master oil burner technician or propane and natural gas technician or is a class 2 or 3 nationally certified refrigeration technician.

3. The Public Utilities Commission shall amend its rules to indicate that a licensed plumber must install or sign off on a solar thermal system if the system is designed to heat potable water.

4. The Public Utilities Commission shall amend its rules that pertain to requirements for obtaining a rebate to include language that states that applications for solar thermal systems must include a copy of the certificate of competency issued by the commission to the installer and that any system that incorporates the heating of potable water must also be accompanied by a copy of the master plumber's license or license number.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Public Utilities Commission to amend its rules pertaining to the solar energy rebate program:

1. To amend the definition of "solar thermal system";
2. To clarify who qualifies as a qualified solar thermal system installer;
3. To indicate that a licensed plumber must install or sign off on a solar thermal system if it is designed to heat potable water; and
4. To require that in order to obtain a rebate under the solar energy rebate program the application must be accompanied by a copy of a certificate of competency issued by the commissioner to the qualified installer and, if the system incorporates the heating of potable water, a copy of the master plumber's license or license number.