



The Importance of Hiring a Licensed Electrical Contractor When Installing Solar Panels—Keeping Homeowners Safe

Any system that produces even small amounts of electricity can potentially be dangerous if installed incorrectly

Mississauga, ON (Apr. 9, 2019) – On Feb. 21, 2019 Alexander Bonello, operating as Btek Renewable Energy Products, was convicted in the Ontario Court of Justice in Orangeville for conducting electrical work without an Electrical Contractor’s Licence and for failing to apply for an inspection. Bonello was ordered to pay in total a \$10,000 fine plus a \$2,500 victim surcharge.

Bonello was contracted by homeowners Tara Cohen and Milan Paynton to install a Net Metering Project (Solar Panels) for their home and garage. Cohen and Paynton grew concerned with the quality of work when Bonello cut through the garage wall with a circular saw and, in doing so, cut the main feed line through the electrical sockets under the panel.

Cohen and Paynton contacted another solar energy company to assess the work by Bonello. The secondary company observed several issues with Bonello’s work and recommended the homeowners contact the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA).

The subsequent ESA investigation uncovered that Bonello was operating without an Electrical Contractor’s Licence and had failed to apply for an inspection for the work he was doing. ESA also determined that the wiring was not done properly and was not up to the Ontario Electrical Safety Code standards, and potentially posing a danger if energized.

“It’s important to remember that any system that produces even small amounts of electricity can be dangerous if installed incorrectly, creating the possibility of electrocution and fire hazards,” says Normand Breton, Registrar and Director of Contractor Licensing, ESA. “As more and more homeowners look to install renewable energy sources it’s important they hire a Licensed Electrical Contractor and ensure all appropriate permits and inspections are secured and carried out.”

“To make sure our home was safe we took a financial hit fixing all the work that Alex [Bonello] did incorrectly,” adds Tara Cohen, homeowner. “But more than anything now we want to ensure that no one else is duped by Btek or similar companies. We want to help bring awareness to other homeowners like us on what they can do to protect themselves.”

Hiring a Licensed Electrical Contractor

When hiring someone to do work, homeowners and businesses are reminded to:

- Ensure the contractor holds all required qualifications and licences – including an ECRA/ESA licence for electrical work. Always ask for their references.
- Check that the contractor has secured all appropriate permits and inspections.
- Advise the contractor that a copy of the ESA Certificate of Inspection is expected to be provided once the electrical work is complete.

To verify or find a Licensed Electrical Contractor, visit <http://findacontractor.esasafe.com>.

About the Electrical Safety Authority

The Electrical Safety Authority's (ESA's) role is to enhance public electrical safety in Ontario. As an Administrative Authority acting on behalf of the Government of Ontario, ESA is responsible for administering specific regulations related to the Ontario Electrical Safety Code, the licensing of Electrical Contractors and Master Electricians, electricity distribution system safety, and electrical product safety. ESA works extensively with stakeholders throughout the province on education, training and promotion to foster electrical safety across the province. More information on the Electrical Safety Authority can be found at esasafe.com, through Twitter at <https://twitter.com/homeandsafety> and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ElectricalSafetyAuthority. ESA's Customer Service Centre can be reached at 1-877-ESA-SAFE (372-7233).

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