

Solar PV Fire Safety Requirements – Frequently Asked Questions

Designed for firefighter safety while keeping your project straightforward and cost-effective.

Q: What do the new solar PV rules in SECTION 1205 mean for my project?

A: The amendments in SECTION 1205 are reasonable, practical, and written to be easy for designers and installers to follow. They provide clear, measurable standards that help ensure firefighter safety without adding major cost or complexity to your solar installation.

Here's why these rules make sense for your projects:

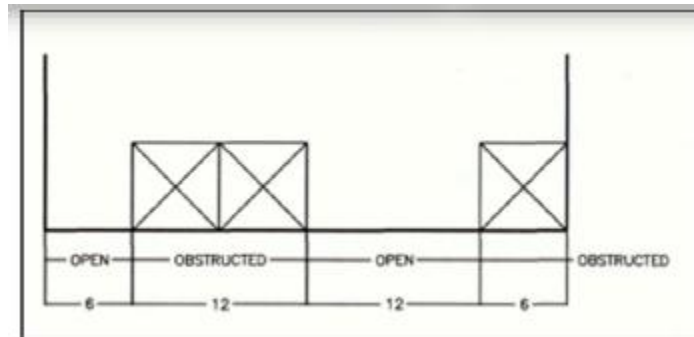
- **Clear, practical layout rules that are easy to follow.** You will be working with measurable requirements such as 6 ft clear pathways, 6×6 landings with 9 ft vertical clearance (flat roofs only), the 12/6 frontage rule, and the clear prohibition that no conduit, wiring, or equipment can cross or obstruct any required access pathway or ventilation area. These are objective numbers instead of vague “reasonable access” language, so you can draw compliant plans the first time.
- **Minimal cost impact on your installations.** Almost every requirement is about layout and documentation — where you place arrays, conduit, signs, and labels. There is no new expensive hardware required. These are the same types of rules solar contractors already follow in larger Illinois jurisdictions.
- **The stricter rules mainly apply to flat roofs.** The combination of the continuous 6 ft perimeter pathway + the “every 12 ft of frontage requires 6 ft open” rule + mandatory 6×6 landings applies only to flat roofs. Since flat roofs are almost always commercial or larger multi-family buildings, these requirements have virtually no impact on typical pitched-roof residential homes.
- **Residential and commercial projects are treated the same.** Because the District already requires the same level of firefighter-safety review for all roof-mounted PV (including one- and two-family dwellings), these details keep things consistent and simple instead of maintaining two different rule sets.
- **Built-in flexibility.** The code includes the phrase “or as approved by the Fire Code Official” throughout the access section. If a specific project has unique conditions, reasonable alternatives can be approved on a case-by-case basis.
- **Small structures are exempt.** Detached garages, carports, trellises, and other small Group U structures are exempt from the enhanced access and pathway requirements.
- **Clear documentation expectations.** Your submitted plans must clearly show all required pathways, landings, signs, conduit routing, rapid shutdown devices, labeling, and battery disconnects (if applicable). This makes plan review faster and reduces the chance of multiple revision cycles.

Bottom line These rules give firefighters meaningful, enforceable protections while keeping your solar project straightforward and cost-effective. The bolded, numbered, and clearly written language in SECTION 1205 is intended to make plan review and permitting faster and more predictable for you.

We strongly encourage you to reach out to the Fire Code Official early in the design process (pre-submittal meeting or email) if you have any questions about how these requirements apply to a specific project — we're here to help you get it right the first time.

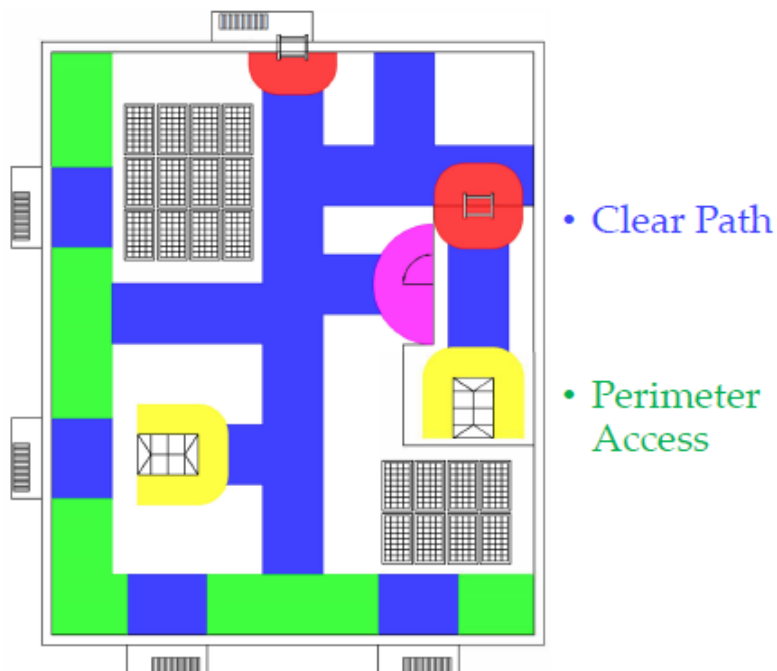
PERIMETER ACCESS OPENINGS

1. Every 12 feet of frontage width requires 6 feet open.
2. The pattern depends on building size.
3. Must be calculated for all apparatus-accessible exposures (includes side streets, parking lots, and any location where a fire apparatus can position).



PERIMETER ACCESS LOCATIONS

1. Each landing shall be a minimum of 6 feet in each direction, with a clearance height of 9 feet above the parapet and rooftop.
2. All landings will connect to the clear path.
3. Fences shall not obstruct access landings and shall provide access to the clear path via gate.
4. Gates:
 - a. 3 feet wide, inward swinging
 - b. May be secured by padlock and chain that are cuttable by standard bolt cutter.



LANDING AREA MEASUREMENTS

1. Measurements are taken from the inside face of the parapet wall.
2. When filing with the Rooftop Unit: a. Indicate height of all raised/decorative parapets. b. Clearly indicate if parapets are sloped, decorative, peaked, or flat topped.



SLOPPED PARAPETS

“Usable” rooftop perimeter access landing area begins where the slope meets the flat portion of the roof.



DECORATIVE CORNICES

Not considered “usable” as part of the perimeter access landing areas. Calculations must begin on the main rooftop level and after the termination of the façade wall.



PERMITER ACCESS OBSTRUCTIONS

Structures affixed to an exterior building wall below the roof line shall not obstruct fire-apparatus aerial ladder access to the rooftop perimeter access locations. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Sun control devices
2. Awnings
3. Solar panels
4. Fire escapes



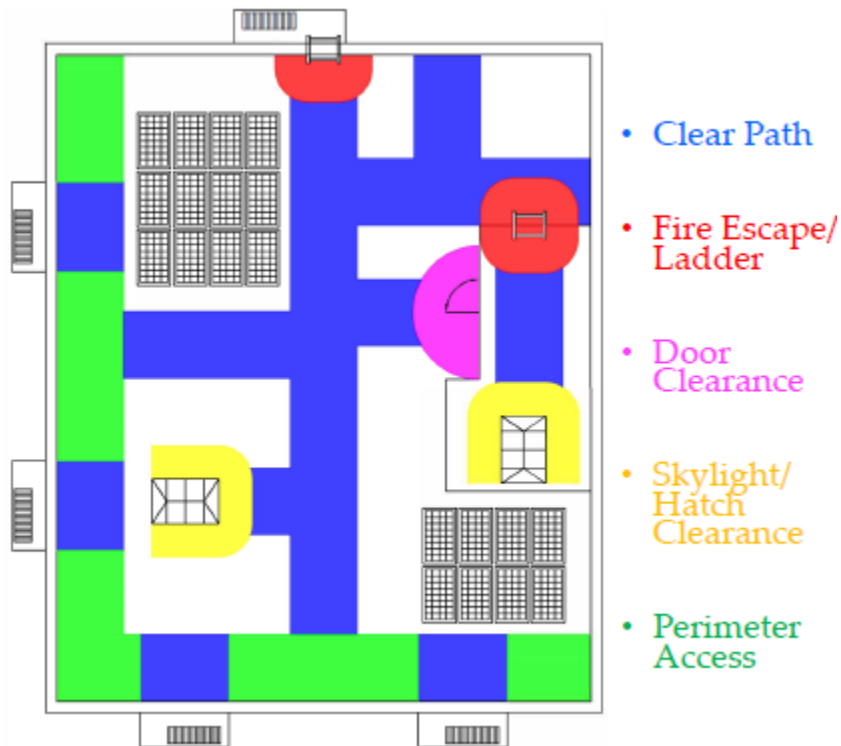
SIGNAGE

Rooftop access signs and markings shall be installed at each required perimeter access location as determined by the Fire Code Official during plan examination. Signs and markings shall be durable and weather-resistant.



CLEAR PATHS

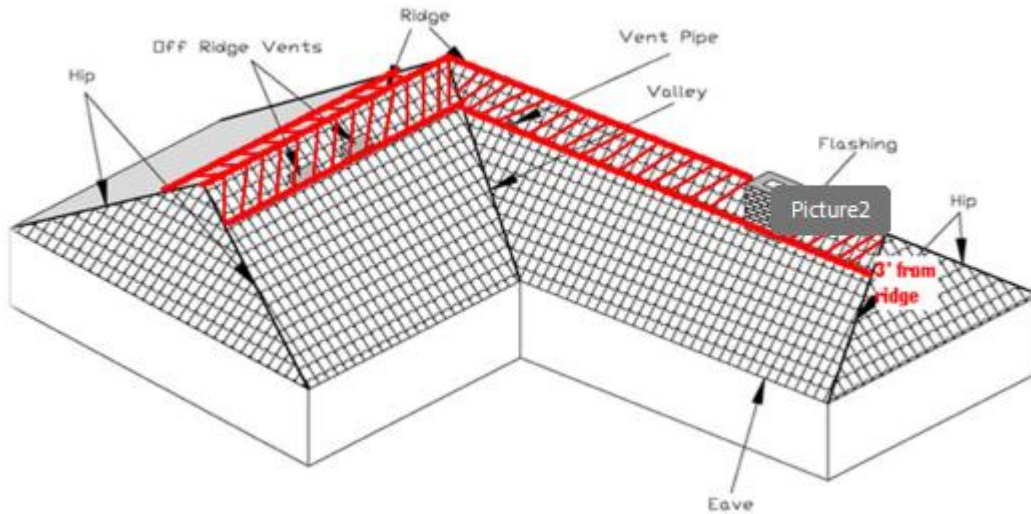
1. Shall connect to all required clearance areas and rooftop energy storage systems (if present).
2. Distinct clear paths shall be provided at intervals of no more than 100 linear feet, with no more than 100 feet between distinct clear paths.
3. These clear paths shall lead to skylights, scuttle hatches, or doors that provide access to the building below and can be used for ventilation by the fire department.



PITCHED ROOFTOPS

For solar panels on pitched roofs:

1. Provide 3 feet of clearance along **both sides** of the ridgeline of each roof.
2. Conduits, wiring systems, and raceways shall be located along hips and valleys away from the ridgeline (to the extent practicable).



Solar panel equipment shall be labeled:

- **‘WARNING: PHOTOVOLTAIC POWER SOURCE’** in white capital letters no less than 3/8” in height on a red background.

Sources for diagrams and illustrations: Adapted from the FDNY Rooftop Access Presentation (March 20, 2024), based on 2022 NYC Fire Code Sections FC504.4, FC504.5 & FC512. Used for illustrative purposes only.

The official requirements for the Utica Community Fire Protection District are contained in SECTION 1205 of the Fire Prevention Code (adopted April 27, 2026).