

Solar Thermal Technology Offers Well-established Brands

Eneref Institute reports on how solar heating and cooling offers end-users the benefit of brands that have been tested and perfected.

While PV is the hot new product, solar heating has a unique advantage: a well-established history. Most of the solar thermal brands on the market today have a long history that's worth promoting to end users.

Even our organizations have a long history. IAPMO was formed in 1926 and is still the plumbing and mechanical code writing organization recognized worldwide for codes that are developed by the industry. The national Solar Energy Industry Association (SEIA) was founded in 1974 – well before PV was commonplace – by first representing solar heating companies. While SEIA's PV division has since outgrown their solar heating and cooling division, SEIA is still the voice of the entire solar industry, working to make solar technologies mainstream, including heating and cooling, PV, CSP and utility-scale solar. **And SRCC has been rating systems since 1980 as an independent, third-party certification organization, which is why government and states rely on them to provide a rational basis for tax credit qualifying regulation.**

Today, in fact, buying an established solar thermal brand all but guarantees a high level of quality because many of the solar thermal

brands on the market have years of experience behind them.

In some ways you could almost call Billy Byrom (founder of AET), the grandfather of today's industry because Byrom has been the launch pad for many installers and even some manufacturers. Byrom started out in the industry back in 1975 – the year Springsteen released "Born To Run", Patti Hearst was arrested and Jimmy Hoffa disappeared – so he's been building solar collectors for nearly forty years.

Caleffi Hydronic Solutions is older still, although they first opened their doors, in Italy. Caleffi began operation in 1961, the same year Kennedy was inaugurated and Alan Shepard went into space. Yet years later, Caleffi's core business is still as a manufacturer of components for heating and domestic water plants.

SunEarth, a solar thermal icon on the west coast, began operation in 1978 and has always had a deep sense of environmental stewardship. Perhaps not a coincidence, 1978 was also the year 400 top climatologists met for the first time in Geneva to discuss how people influence climate change.

Heliodyne too has been in operation for over three decades, and began man-

ufacturing the same year "Rocky" was released and Cincinnati won the World Series (again) – 1976.

Even SolarUS, a relative new-comer, is led by CEO Steve Elkin whose history and reputation within the solar thermal industry was already established and well-known. SolarUS produces evacuated tubes and other solar thermal products for both residential and commercial markets.

At the same time, we've seen some exciting new blood enter the market. From their very start in 2006 SunMaxx Solar was a player. SunMaxx successfully entered the market with turnkey prepackaged residential and commercial kits; and now offers both industry recognized brands of evacuated tube and flat plate technology.


SunChiller is another company to keep an eye on. Projects using evacuated tube and direct flow solar thermal collectors supplied by SunChiller have been operating successfully and reliably throughout the United States since 2004. As the brand name implies, SunChiller's President & CEO Serge Adamian is active in the solar cooling side of the business.

While Sunnovations is perhaps the newest member of American solar panel collector manufacturers to enter the market, they began by offering several innovative "industry firsts" according to Sunnovations CEO Matt Carlson.

While many of the solar heating and cooling technologies on the market today are tried and true, some of the most important innovations have come from the finance side of the equation. Aptly named Skyline Innovations has a simple offer: guaranteed savings to business and multifamily buildings

by providing a fixed discount to customer's utility rate for water heating. Although financing projects only since 2009, Skyline has been partnering with well-established manufacturers and installers to offer customers a complete care program of financing, installation, maintenance and monitoring for commercial-scale solar water heating systems with no upfront cost to the customer. The company was founded by Zach Axelrod who came to solar water heating from the smart grid energy solutions industry.

While PV certainly offers the shiny appearance of something new, solar thermal technology offers well-established brands that have become solar stalwarts. Solar heating – and now solar cooling – offers America a number of brands that have been tested and perfected. While solar heating might sound like a new idea to your customers, you could remind them that the company's technology you're installing is likely older than the facility you're installing it on. ●



TM This article is part of
an ongoing initiative
by Enerref Institute to
enerref demonstrate the benefits
of solar heating and cooling.
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sensible innovations.