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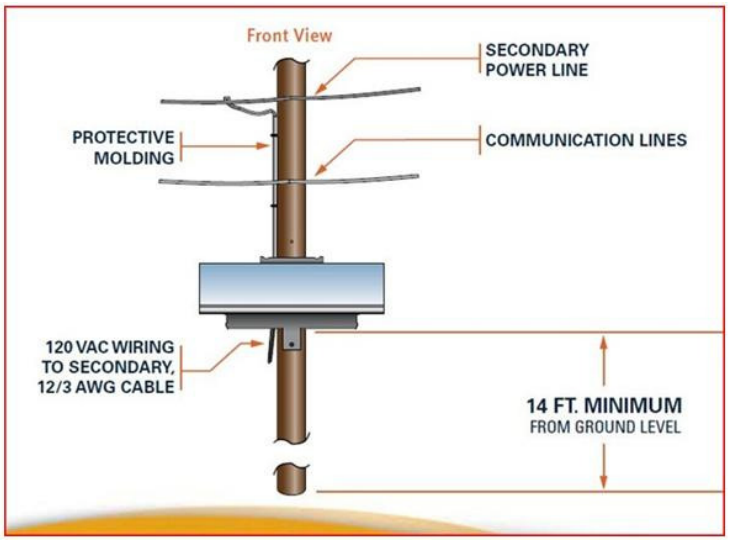
Snapshot Size-Up #121



Pole Mounted Solar Panels

In today's society, it is common to come across solar panels that are attached to utility poles. In some towns, like mine, these panels are installed on every fourth of fifth pole. Although the panels you come across in your community may be different then the ones I encounter, here is some information regarding the pole-mounted solar panels found in my town: The units weigh approximately 60 pounds. They are rectangle in shape, measure approximately 5' wide by 2½' High, and are usually mounted 14' to 18' from the ground. These panels operate at 120V, and as with all electrical equipment, firefighters should treat them as though they are energized at all times. Only properly trained utility personnel, working with the appropriate safety equipment, shall be allowed to work on pole-mounted electrical equipment; however, the public doesn't know this, so when problems occur, your fire department may be called to the scene. Whether there is a nearby fire or not, the precautions that firefighters should take when they arrive at an emergency scene where pole-mounted solar panels/electrical equipment are involved remain the same. Below is a list of actions that should be taken to ensure the protection of you and your crew:

1. It is imperative that you treat solar panel as you would any other high voltage, pole mounted equipment.
2. Establish a safe operating area and cordon off the area with caution tape. A good rule of thumb would be to move member's back at least one pole length.
3. Position radio equipped members wherever necessary to prevent onlookers from entering the un-safe area.
4. Notify the utility company. Request them at the scene and get an estimated time of arrival.
5. Remain on scene until a qualified member of the utility company arrives and determines that your presence is no longer needed.
6. Remember the golden rule of electricity: Do not touch any electrical equipment EVER!

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Diagram from www.greentechnolog.com