



Standard Practice for Installation, Commissioning, Operation, and Maintenance Process (ICOMP) of Photovoltaic Arrays¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E3010; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

^{ε1} NOTE—Fig. X1.1 was updated editorially in July 2021.

1. Scope

1.1 This practice details the minimum requirements for installation, commissioning, operations, and maintenance processes to ensure safe and reliable power generation for the expected life of the photovoltaic system. Specifically dealing with commercial photovoltaic installations, this practice covers a broad spectrum of designs and applications and is focused on the proper process to ensure quality.

1.2 This practice does not cover the electrical aspects of installation found in existing and national codes and does not replace or supersede details of electrical installation covered by the same. The practice does address the integration of best practices into design and construction.

1.3 This practice shall not dictate specific design criteria or favor any product or technology.

1.4 This practice shall be focused on the proper, documented process required to build and operate a quality PV plant as defined in Section 3.

1.5 Integration of best practices shall be relevant to this standard and promote a mechanism for rapid evolution and reaction to changes or events. Conformity assessment for PV power plants is being developed through the IEC System for Certification to Standards Relating to Equipment for Use in Renewable Energy Applications (IECRE System). Sandia Labs has developed several model documents that may be adopted as acceptable consensus standards through other standards development organizations.

1.6 The standard is divided into three key areas:

1.6.1 Design, engineering, and construction of the PV plant. Systems should be designed with operation and maintenance (O&M) in mind. Further standards should be developed for building integrated or building mounted systems, modules with

embedded power electronics, lightweight flexible modules, or other specific components.

1.6.2 Commissioning, testing, and approval for power generation (Utility Witness Testing). Standards for owner acceptance will also be addressed.

1.6.3 O&M of the PV plant including performance monitoring, periodic inspection, preventive maintenance, and periodic re-commissioning.

1.7 Safety and hazard considerations unique to this application, such as worker fall protection, electrical exposure, accessibility of modules, and roof clearance (around the perimeter of the array) are addressed by other codes, standards, or authorities having jurisdiction.

1.8 This practice provides guidelines for minimum processes required and must be used in conjunction with applicable codes and standards, government regulations, manufacturer requirements, and best practices.

1.9 This practice is not intended to replace or supersede any other applicable local codes, standards or Licensed Design Professional instructions for a given installation.

1.10 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

1.11 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

- 2.1 *ASTM Standards*:²
[E772 Terminology of Solar Energy Conversion](#)

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E44 on Solar, Geothermal and Other Alternative Energy Sources and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E44.09 on Photovoltaic Electric Power Conversion.

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

E2047 Test Method for Wet Insulation Integrity Testing of Photovoltaic Arrays

E2848 Test Method for Reporting Photovoltaic Non-Concentrator System Performance

E2908 Guide for Fire Prevention for Photovoltaic Panels, Modules, and Systems

2.2 *IEC Standards*:³

IEC 61215: Terrestrial Photovoltaic (PV) Modules – Design Qualification and Type Approval

IEC 61724: PV System Performance Monitoring – Guidelines for Measurement Data Exchange and Analysis

IEC 61829: Crystalline Silicon PV Array – On-site Measurements of I-V Characteristics

IEC/TS 61836: Solar PV Energy Systems – Terms, Definitions and Symbols

IEC 62446: Grid Connected PV Systems – Minimum Requirements for System Documentation, Commissioning, and Inspection

IEC/TS 62548: PV Arrays – Design Requirements

IEC 62738: Design Guidelines and Recommendations for PV Power Plants [5 MW and Greater, Ground Mount]

IEC 62446–2 (draft in progress) Maintenance of PV Systems

IECRE-PV: Conformity Assessment

2.3 *ANSI Standards*⁴

ANSI/TUV-R Cleaning Frequency

ANSI/TUV-R 71731 Simulated Sand and Dust Tests of Photovoltaic (PV) Modules: Part 1 – Soiling Testing for Superstrates

ANSI/TUV-R 71732 Qualification Plus Testing for PV Modules—Test and Sampling Requirements

2.4 *UL Standards*⁵

UL 1741 Inverters, Converters, Controllers and Interconnection System Equipment for Use With Distributed Energy Resources

UL 4730 Nameplate Tolerance Standard

2.5 *Other Standards*

IEEE 1547: Standard for Interconnecting Distributed Resources with Electric Power Systems⁶

NECA 412-2012: Standard for Installing and Maintaining PV Power Systems⁷

NFPA 70 National Electrical Code, Article 690⁸

Solar ABCs – PV System Operations and Maintenance Fundamentals⁹

2.6 *NREL Documents*¹⁰

SAPC PV Operations and Maintenance Best Practices Guide: Considerations for Financial Managers and Industry Practitioners, version 1.0

2.7 *SNL Documents*¹¹

SAND 2015 - 0587 Precursor Report of Data Needs and Recommended Practices for PV Plant Availability, Operations and Maintenance Reporting

SAND2014 - 20612 PV Reliability Operations and Maintenance (PVROM) Database Initiative: 2014 Progress Report

2.8 *SunSpec References*¹²

Commissioning Best Practices and Re-Commissioning oSPARC – Open Solar Performance and Reliability Clearinghouse Database

Solar PV Monitoring Best Practice

SAPC Standard O&M Contract

3. Terminology

3.1 In addition to the terms defined in **E772**, the following terms are defined for the purpose of this standard.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard*:

3.2.1 *construction, PV system*—the process of preparing and assembling the various components of a PV system, including site preparation, foundations, structural assembly, and installation of mechanical and electrical equipment.

3.2.2 *commissioning, PV system*—the process of starting the operation of a PV system, including verification of construction according to design, confirmation of functional performance, and transfer of responsibility to the system operator.

3.2.3 *design, PV System*—the information required to construct and operate a PV system.

3.2.3.1 *Discussion*—Typically prepared by a qualified engineer or design professional, this information may include drawings, text documents, calculations, or other forms of documentation. Design includes specifications and configuration for components and materials.

3.2.4 *operation and maintenance (O&M), PV system*—procedures to assure functionality of system components and connections for reliability, safety and fire prevention; monitoring of performance indicators, measures to track and maximize anticipated performance, diagnostic measures, troubleshooting, and documentation.

3.2.4.1 *Discussion*—This includes controllable or modifiable maintenance items that impact system yield, uptime, availability, and the ability to operate effectively under existing local environmental and climatological conditions, and site-related activities such as module washing and upkeep of vegetation for both performance and safety reasons.

¹⁰ Available from National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), 901 D, Street, S.W. Suite 930, Washington, DC 20024, <http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy15osti/63235.pdf>

¹¹ Available from Sandia National Laboratories (SNL), energy.sandia.gov

¹² Available from SunSpec Alliance, 4030 Moorpark Ave, Suite 109, San Jose, CA 95117.

³ Available from International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), 3, rue de Varembe, P.O. Box 131, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland, <http://www.iec.ch>.

⁴ Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036, <http://www.ansi.org>.

⁵ Available from Underwriters Laboratories (UL), 2600 N.W. Lake Rd., Camas, WA 98607-8542, <http://www.ul.com>.

⁶ Available from Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc. (IEEE), 445 Hoes Ln., Piscataway, NJ 08854, <http://www.ieee.org>.

⁷ Available from National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), 3 Bethesda Metro Center, Suite 1100, Bethesda, MA 20814, <http://www.necanet.org>.

⁸ Available from National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169-7471, <http://www.nfpa.org>.

⁹ PDF available from Solar America Board for Codes and Standards (Solar ABCs), www.solarabcs.org/about/publications.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 With the rapid expansion of the commercial photovoltaic market and the various standards and independent certification entities evolving, a consensus standard practice for the ICOMP process is needed to bring consistency to the market.

4.2 Investors and insurance companies need consistency of product and standards to reduce costs of capital and underwriting. Use of a consensus standard practice is expected to improve consistency and reduce risk for investors.

4.3 Photovoltaic systems operate in harsh environments that are not typical for electrical equipment and generally inconsistent with electrical contractor experience. Documented processes are needed to ensure performance and durability of the systems over the long operating life.

4.4 The goal of this practice is to implement processes to improve safety and reliability, reduce lifecycle costs (commonly referred to as Levelized Cost of Energy or LCOE), and encourage the development of feedback loops for continuous improvement of results.

4.5 This practice may be applied during any or all phases of the PV System Lifecycle (refer to Section 5). A record of the activities carried out according to this practice shall be included in the Report (refer to Section 8).

5. PV System Lifecycle

5.1 The lifecycle of a PV system can be divided into the following stages and areas of emphasis. These terms are used in the following section to identify the applicable requirements at each stage of the system lifecycle:

5.1.1 Design

- 5.1.1.1 Reliability
- 5.1.1.2 Measurability
- 5.1.1.3 Safety

5.1.2 Risk Mitigation

- 5.1.2.1 Financing
- 5.1.2.2 Insurance

5.1.3 Construction

- 5.1.3.1 Best practices
- 5.1.3.2 Risk mitigation

5.1.4 Commissioning

- 5.1.4.1 Design compliance
- 5.1.4.2 Performance verification

5.1.5 Operation and Maintenance

- 5.1.5.1 Performance monitoring
- 5.1.5.2 Operations
- 5.1.5.3 Maintenance

5.1.6 Transaction Process

- 5.1.6.1 Ownership transfer

6. Process Requirements

6.1 *Design*—The design of a PV system shall include, as a minimum, the following characteristics:

6.1.1 Documented process for ensuring quality and implementation of best practices throughout the design process.

6.1.2 For systems larger than 5 MW, data for system verification and commissioning should include validated performance modeling including documentation of assumptions

and derating factors used. Such documentation should be reproducible and compatible with current editions of industry standard software.¹³ Refer to **Appendix XI** for a typical example of the report generated from a common software package.

6.1.3 A strategy for mitigation of lost production should be documented.

6.1.4 The design shall incorporate best practices to facilitate the operation and maintenance of the plant over its expected life time. Accessibility of all equipment shall be ensured, and O&M procedures shall be clearly documented.

6.1.5 There should be a documented review of safety and construction processes.

6.2 *Construction*—There shall be a documented process for construction to ensure quality.

6.2.1 The documented quality process for construction work shall consider environment, roof, soils, and other factors, and it shall include the following:

6.2.1.1 Vegetation control plan designed to ensure proper operation throughout the system lifecycle,

6.2.1.2 Site water flow plan—roof and ground,

6.2.1.3 Plan for inspection, testing, and documentation of materials delivered to the construction site,

6.2.1.4 Material handling plan and spares plan,

6.2.1.5 Plan for replacement of parts,

6.2.1.6 Fire access and training,

6.2.1.7 Siting and access of meteorological station or SCADA equipment (for systems larger than 5 MW), or both,

6.2.1.8 Plan and inspection process for ensuring that conductors are free from strain or abrasion, and allowed to flex due to thermal expansion,

6.2.1.9 Installation of raceways and fixtures for thermal expansion,

6.2.1.10 Plan and accessibility for torque maintenance including appropriate anti-seize provisions and conformance to manufacturers' recommended torque specifications,

6.2.1.11 Documented verification process to ensure correct polarity of all electrical components and connecting cables,

6.2.1.12 Installation of all equipment in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations,

6.2.1.13 Protection of surfaces to ensure long term performance of roofs (especially membrane type), and

6.2.1.14 Access for service of the PV plant and any adjacent equipment.

6.3 *Commissioning*—The commissioning of a PV system shall include, as a minimum, the following activities:

6.3.1 For systems larger than 5 MW, validation and certification of system performance (power output), based on performance modeling developed in the design process,

6.3.2 Documented quality testing for safety and performance consistent with best practices, including:

6.3.2.1 IEC 62446,

6.3.2.2 SunSpec Guide to Commissioning Measurements, and

¹³ Many standard software packages can be found at <http://photovoltaic-software.com/professional.php>.