



Which solar panels

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Independent advice on how to buy solar photovoltaic panels and choosing the ...

Image: pv magazine

The Renewable Energy Test Center (RETC) released its 2023 PV Module Index report, evaluating the reliability, quality, and performance of solar panels.

Solar modules are put through a variety of accelerated stress tests to evaluate these parameters. Through comparative test results, project stakeholders can select products best suited for a particular environment, location, or portfolio.

Hail durability

Top performers: JA Solar, JinkoSolar, Trina Solar

RETC's hail durability test takes UL and IEC standards testing a step further, exposing solar modules to higher kinetic impact to reflect the risk posed by hail over a 25 or 30-year operating life. In addition to ballistic impact testing, RETC runs thermal cycle and hot-spot tests to reveal potential long-term module degradation.

The top eight performers in this category withstood an effective kinetic energy of 20 Joules or more. These modules effectively demonstrated resistance to a 45 mm (1.8 in.) iceball traveling at a terminal velocity of 30.7 m/s (68.7 mph).

Top performers: Astronergy, JA Solar Longi Solar, Runergy

The thresher test is a summation of a series of tests that places modules under a variety of vigorous environmental stresses to provide quantitative data behind degradation modes. Power drop, leakage current and visual observations are also made in the test.

The RETC test places backsheets, modules, and connectors through accelerated stresses. Thresher tests include humidity-freeze cycling, thermal cycling, damp heat exposure, static and dynamic load testing, and UV soaking. High performers in this category consistently achieved less than 2% of power degradation.

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