

VERIFYING A SOLAR COMPANY BEFORE YOU PAY

A Bonus Guide from Eccentric Solar Limited



By Jonathan Onovo, Founder, Eccentric Solar Limited

INTRODUCTION



By this point, you've calculated your real system size and learned how to spot substandard components. This guide covers the third leg of protecting yourself: confirming that the company you're about to pay is actually who they say they are, before any money changes hands.

Here's something most buyers don't realize: the tools to check this are free, official, and take only a few minutes to use, yet almost nobody uses them before paying a deposit. Most people rely instead on how confident a salesman sounds, how professional a Facebook page looks, or a recommendation from a friend of a friend. None of these tell you whether a company is legally real, properly registered, or staffed by anyone with actual engineering competence.

This guide walks you through the exact, official verification steps, using the real government and professional-body portals available to any Nigerian, for free, right now. By the end, you'll have a five-minute routine you can run on any vendor before you ever discuss a deposit.

CHAPTER 1: USING THE CAC PUBLIC SEARCH PORTAL



What the CAC Is and Why This Matters First

The Corporate Affairs Commission is the federal body responsible for registering every legal business entity in Nigeria, from a one-person "Business Name" to a fully incorporated Limited Company. If a business claims to be legitimate, it should exist in CAC's records, and you can check this yourself, for free, without needing any special access or relationship with the company.

This is your very first check, before anything about solar sizing, components, or pricing, because if a business doesn't even legally exist under the name it's trading with, nothing else about the transaction can be trusted with confidence.

Step-by-Step: How to Search

1. **Go to search.cac.gov.ng** on your phone or computer browser. This is CAC's official public search portal.
2. **Get the company's exact registered name and, ideally, their RC (Registration Certificate) number** directly from the vendor. Ask them plainly: "What's your company's RC number?" A legitimate business should provide this immediately, without hesitation, since it's public information anyway.
3. **Search by RC number if you have it, rather than by name alone.** This is important: many businesses in Nigeria have similar or identical-sounding names, especially common words like "Solar," "Energy," or "Power" combined with a common surname or city. Searching by name alone can return several similar results, and you may

end up looking at the wrong company entirely. The RC number is a unique identifier and removes this ambiguity. 4. **Confirm three things once you find the match:** the registered company name matches exactly what you were told, the entity status shows as active (not "inactive" or "struck off"), and the registration date gives you a sense of how long the company has legally existed.

What a Legitimate Result Looks Like

You should see the company's registered name, its RC number, its entity type (we'll cover why this matters in Chapter 2), and its current status. An active status with a registration date that reasonably matches how long the vendor claims to have been operating is a good sign.

Red Flags at This Stage

If the vendor hesitates, deflects, or becomes evasive when you ask for their RC number, treat this as a serious warning sign on its own, before you've even opened the CAC portal. A legitimate, properly registered business has no reason to make this difficult, since the information is public regardless. If you do search and find no matching record at all, or the registered name is meaningfully different from what you were told (not just a shortened version, but a genuinely different entity), this is a clear reason to pause the transaction entirely until it's explained satisfactorily.

What Comes Next

Finding a company on CAC is an important first step, but Chapter 2 covers something equally important: understanding exactly what this registration does, and doesn't, actually prove about the company you're dealing with.

CHAPTER 2: WHAT CAC REGISTRATION DOES AND DOESN'T PROVE



Why This Chapter Exists

It's tempting, once you've confirmed a company is CAC-registered, to feel fully reassured and stop checking further. This chapter exists to prevent that mistake, because CAC registration confirms something narrower and more specific than most buyers assume.

What CAC Registration Actually Confirms

CAC registration confirms that a business legally exists as a recognized entity in Nigeria, under a specific name, with a specific registration date, and (depending on entity type) certain basic ownership information on file. That's genuinely valuable, it rules out a business operating entirely outside any legal framework, with no accountability trail at all.

What CAC Registration Does Not Confirm

Here's what it doesn't tell you, and this is the part most buyers miss: CAC registration says nothing about whether the company's equipment carries proper certification (covered in the main guide and Bonus Guide 1), nothing about whether anyone on their technical team has verified engineering competence (covered in Chapter 3 of this guide), and nothing about the quality of their actual installation work. A company can be perfectly, legitimately CAC-registered and still do poor-quality solar work, or sell substandard components.

Registration is a floor, not a ceiling, it rules out complete illegitimacy, but it doesn't rule in competence or quality.

Understanding the Difference Between a "Business Name" and a "Limited Company"

When you check the entity type on CAC's search results, you'll typically see one of two structures, and the difference matters more than most buyers realize:

A Business Name is essentially a registered trading name for a sole proprietorship or partnership. It's simpler and cheaper to register, which is exactly why many small, informal solar vendors operate this way. Critically, a Business Name does not create a separate legal entity from its owner, meaning there's generally no separation between the business's obligations and the individual owner's personal liability. If something goes seriously wrong and you needed legal recourse, you'd effectively be pursuing an individual person, who may or may not have the means to make things right.

A Limited Company (often shown as "LTD" or similar) is a separate legal entity from its owners or directors. It has its own legal existence, can be sued or held accountable in its own name, and generally reflects a more formal, more substantial business operation, one that's typically made a bigger investment in being properly structured. This doesn't automatically mean better quality work, but it does generally mean more formal accountability if something goes wrong, and it's often (though not always) a signal of a more established, more seriously run operation.

Neither structure is inherently a red flag on its own, plenty of honest, competent solar installers operate as registered Business Names. But understanding which one you're dealing with helps you calibrate your expectations around accountability if a dispute arises later, and it's a completely free, two-second thing to check once you're already looking at the CAC search result.

What Comes Next

Chapter 3 clears up two of the most common points of confusion in the Nigerian solar market: whether a vendor genuinely needs a NERC licence for your job, and how to think fairly about NEMSA paperwork and COREN registration together, since vendors sometimes use confusion around these exact points to seem more (or less) official than they really are.

CHAPTER 3: NERC LICENCES, NEMSA PAPERWORK, AND COREN REGISTRATION — WHAT ACTUALLY MATTERS



Why This Chapter Exists

This is genuinely one of the most confused areas in the Nigerian solar market, and confusion here gets used, sometimes deliberately, sometimes just out of a vendor's own misunderstanding, to make a company sound either more regulated than it needs to be, or to wave away a legitimate question with a vague reassurance. This chapter separates the two regulatory questions that actually matter from the one that usually doesn't apply to you at all.

The NERC Licence Question

The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) issues generation licences under the Electric Power Sector Reform Act. Here's the key fact that resolves almost all confusion around this topic: for a typical home or office solar installation, generating power for your own use (what's called self-generation) at a scale under 1 megawatt, no NERC generation licence is required at all. This exemption covers the overwhelming majority of residential and small business solar installations in Nigeria, your home or office system, even a fairly large one, is very unlikely to approach anywhere near this threshold.

What this means practically: if a vendor presents a "NERC licence" as a special credential that sets them apart, or implies that a competitor without one is somehow operating illegally for a standard residential or

office job, this deserves a direct follow-up question, something like "why would this specific installation need a licence that generally only applies at a much larger scale?" It's not necessarily a sign of dishonesty, some vendors genuinely misunderstand this themselves, but it's worth clarifying rather than being impressed by unfamiliar regulatory language.

The NEMSA Paperwork Question, Revisited Fairly

We covered this in detail in Bonus Guide 1, but it's worth restating clearly here, since it's directly relevant to vendor verification. NEMSA type approval is, in principle, required for solar equipment sold in Nigeria. In practice, most of the retail market doesn't carry this documentation consistently, and NEMSA enforcement is genuinely strict specifically around government contract bidding, not everyday retail sales. This means demanding to see complete NEMSA paperwork as a condition of trusting any vendor sets an unrealistic bar that would end up flagging good, honest installers right alongside dishonest ones. It's worth asking about, and a vendor who's transparent and knowledgeable about it deserves credit, but its absence alone isn't proof of a problem.

COREN Registration: The More Realistic, Checkable Standard

This is the credential that most directly and fairly reflects whether the people doing your installation have verified engineering competence. The Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria runs a dedicated Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency (RE/EE) Certification Scheme specifically covering solar PV and related renewable energy work, and as of mid-2025, COREN has a formal partnership with NEMSA to align standards between the two bodies.

How to check this yourself:

1. Go to portal.coren.gov.ng. 2. Use the platform's verification tool to check either a firm's registration or an individual practitioner's COREN registration number. 3. Ask the vendor directly whether their installing engineer or technical lead is COREN-registered, ideally under the RE/EE scheme specifically, and ask for the registration number so you can verify it yourself.

How to weigh this fairly: a vendor whose technical lead is COREN-registered under the renewable energy scheme is demonstrating a genuine, checkable level of engineering competence, this is a meaningfully stronger signal than a general claim of "years of experience" with nothing to verify it against. That said, plenty of competent, experienced technicians in Nigeria's solar market may not yet be formally COREN-registered, particularly given how quickly this specific certification scheme has grown, so its absence isn't automatically disqualifying either, it's one strong positive signal among several, not a strict pass-or-fail gate on its own.

Putting the Three Together, Fairly

Here's the balanced way to think about all three: don't be impressed by a NERC licence you almost certainly don't need. Don't reject a vendor purely for lacking NEMSA equipment paperwork most of the honest market doesn't have either. Do give real, meaningful weight to CAC registration (Chapter 1) and COREN-registered technical staff, since these are the two checks that are both realistic to expect and genuinely informative about who you're dealing with.

What Comes Next

Chapter 4 brings everything from this guide together into a single, fast routine you can run on any vendor before you send a deposit.

CHAPTER 4: A 5-MINUTE PRE-PAYMENT VERIFICATION ROUTINE



Putting It All Together

You now understand each individual check in depth. This chapter compresses everything into a simple, repeatable sequence, so you can actually run it quickly in the moment, rather than needing to re-read the full guide every time you're considering a new vendor.

YOUR 5-MINUTE ROUTINE

Minute 1 — Ask for their RC number directly. "What's your company's RC number?" A legitimate vendor answers immediately. Hesitation here is itself informative, even before you check anything.

Minute 2 — Verify on CAC. Go to search.cac.gov.ng, search by the RC number, and confirm: registered name matches, status shows active, entity type noted (Business Name or Limited Company).

Minute 3 — Ask about their technical lead's COREN registration. "Is your installing engineer or technical lead COREN-registered, ideally under the renewable energy scheme? Can I have the registration number?" Note whether they answer confidently and specifically, or vaguely.

Minute 4 — Verify on COREN, if a number was provided. Go to portal.coren.gov.ng and use the verification tool to check the number they gave you.

Minute 5 — Ask for their physical address and warranty terms in writing. "What's your physical store or office address, and can I get your warranty terms written into the invoice?" This closes the loop on the physical-presence and written-accountability checks from the main guide's vendor vetting checklist.

What to Do With Your Results

If a vendor clears all five minutes cleanly, name matches, status active, technical lead registered or credibly explained, physical address confirmed, warranty in writing, you're dealing with a company that has real, checkable legitimacy behind it. This doesn't guarantee perfect workmanship (that's what the main guide's sizing calculations and Bonus Guide 1's component checks are for), but it means you're dealing with an accountable, real business rather than an anonymous operation that could disappear tomorrow.

If a vendor stumbles on two or more of these five minutes, particularly hesitating on the RC number or having no verifiable physical address, slow down. This doesn't necessarily mean fraud, but it means you should ask more questions, get more references, or consider other options before committing a deposit.

A Final Thought

Combine this routine with the main guide's 7-Point Vendor Vetting Checklist and Bonus Guide 1's component checks, and you have a complete, realistic verification system, one built around what's actually checkable and fair in the Nigerian market, not an idealized standard that flags every honest vendor alongside the dishonest ones. Keep this routine alongside your other worksheets. Five minutes, before any deposit, every single time.

A note before you go: the verification steps in this guide use real, official Nigerian portals (CAC and COREN) as of the time of writing. Your results may vary if a portal's process changes, and passing these checks confirms legitimacy and registration, not a guarantee of installation quality, which the main guide's sizing and vetting tools are designed to address separately.