

SWH - Northmore Gordon

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SWH

SWH stands for Solar Water Heater, as defined on our glossary page. Solar water heaters capture thermal energy from the sun to heat water for domestic, commercial or industrial use. They represent a renewable heating option that can reduce reliance on gas or electric heating systems. Understanding SWH technology is relevant when assessing heating upgrades, evaluating renewable heat feasibility, or considering decarbonisation pathways for facilities with hot-water demands.

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What does SWH stand for?

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How do solar water heaters fit into Northmore Gordon's energy optimisation service framework?

Solar water heaters are evaluated as part of our renewable heat assessment process, which investigates options for planned gas reduction and electrification. They are considered during the 'Build the Case' stage of the delivery approach, where technical and commercial viability of heating alternatives are assessed. SWH systems may be incorporated into investment cases and feasibility studies, particularly for facilities with consistent hot-water requirements. Their suitability depends on site conditions, thermal load profiles, space availability and integration with existing systems.

What practical considerations should be assessed before installing a solar water heater?

A solar water heater assessment should define the useful heat requirement—including temperature, volume, timing and reliability needs—before selecting equipment. Key considerations include solar resource availability at the site location, roof or mounting space orientation and shading, integration with backup heating systems, storage capacity, and maintenance requirements. The assessment should compare SWH against alternative heating options using consistent duty assumptions and energy prices. Seasonal variations in solar availability and hot-water demand should be matched to determine if thermal storage or hybrid systems are needed.

Can solar water heaters generate environmental certificates or incentive funding?

Solar water heater eligibility for certificates or incentives depends on the specific scheme, jurisdiction and activity. In Victoria, small solar water heaters may be eligible under Victorian Energy Upgrades, but eligibility criteria, specifications and certificate assumptions vary by activity version. Other schemes may have different rules. Before relying on certificate proceeds or grant funding in an investment case, the applicable scheme rules and current specifications must be confirmed. We provide environmental certificate assessment services to help determine scheme eligibility and commercial terms for proposed projects.

How should solar water heater performance be verified after installation?

Solar water heater performance verification requires establishing a baseline of pre-installation hot-water consumption and conditions, then measuring post-installation performance under comparable operating circumstances. Measurement and verification should account for variations in solar irradiance, ambient temperature, water consumption patterns and any changes in operating schedules or facility use. The measurement boundary should be clear, distinguishing the solar heating contribution from backup heating systems. We provide measurement and verification services to quantify energy savings and support evidence requirements for funding or reporting purposes.

What related hot water technology pages does Northmore Gordon link to from its glossary?

Our glossary page links to its 'Hot Water Systems' technology page under the Upgrades section. This provides complementary guidance on assessing and optimising hot-water systems more broadly, including considerations for different heating fuel types, system configurations and efficiency improvements. The Hot Water Systems page would address related technologies and assessment approaches that context solar water heaters within the wider landscape of hot-water heating solutions.

Where would solar water heater assessment fit within Northmore Gordon's six-stage delivery approach?

A solar water heater project would typically enter the framework at the 'Assess' stage through energy audits or utility benchmarking, which identify hot-water heating as a significant energy consumer. During 'Build the Case', renewable heat options including SWH are evaluated for technical and commercial viability against the site's specific hot-water duty. 'Capture Value' would assess available incentives, while 'Deliver' would manage installation and measurement planning. This structured approach ensures the technology is matched to actual operating requirements rather than selected in isolation.

How do seasonal variations affect solar water heater design and expected performance?

Solar water heater design must account for seasonal variations in solar irradiance, ambient temperature and hot-water demand. Winter performance is typically lower due to reduced solar availability, while summer may generate excess heat. These variations influence decisions about thermal storage capacity, backup heating sizing and system configuration. The assessment should model performance across a representative annual cycle rather than relying on single-season assumptions. Performance expectations should reflect actual site conditions and operating patterns, distinguishing forecast outcomes from verified results after commissioning.