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# AZ Economy

## Family loses \$24,000 when solar firm fails to install panels

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USA TODAY NETWORK

Jason and Alyssa Feeser were trying to be good stewards of both their finances and the environment when they paid a solar company nearly \$24,000 last year to install rooftop solar on their Glendale home.

A salesman for AEOS Energy told the first-time homeowners that the panels could reduce electrical bills by as much as 35%, Feeser said. That was a big deal for a family on a tight budget.

Feeser, 29, is a graduate student and assistant pastor at Calvary Community Church who builds furniture on the side. His wife cares for their two young children. They drive older cars and try to avoid debt, he said.

Other members of their church had good experiences installing solar, Feeser said. He found no bad reviews of the company online, and his father gave the thumbs-up after looking over the contract.

"We're trying to make our house be long-term, green and eco-friendly and save us some money," Feeser said. "Praise God, let's go for it."

But four months after hiring AEOS Energy, the company hadn't begun work.

"I was starting to get weird vibes," Feeser said. Other customers were, too.

In total, seven homeowners across metro Phoenix filed complaints accusing AEOS Energy and its owner, Jonathan Kirkland, of failing to install solar panels despite taking more than \$200,000 in payments.

The Arizona Registrar of Contractors announced earlier this month it would revoke the company's license.

"It's definitely a bummer," Feeser said. "Everybody is so mad."

The *Arizona Republic* was unable to reach Kirkland or a company representative.

"Unfortunately Aeos Energy is going through some financial hardships. At this time the Arizona company will be winding downs (sic) its operations," Kirkland emailed Feeser last month. "I know this will no doubt cause frustration on all parts involved."

Solar in the Valley of the Sun seemed like a smart option to Feeser after air-conditioning costs for the family's 1,800-square-foot house rose to \$500 a month last year after rate increases by Arizona Public Service Co., he said.

"Those murdered us last summer," Feeser said. "We literally couldn't afford



Church assistant pastor Jason Feeser and his wife, Alyssa, paid AEOS Energy \$24,000 to install solar panels on their Glendale home. The company never delivered. COURTESY OF FIERCE AND FRINGE PHOTOGRAPHY

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it. We were pushing bills to the next month."

A trusted friend recommended AEOS Energy as a start-up investing heavily in rooftop solar. The friend didn't realize the company would later fold, Feeser said.

The family took out a nearly \$24,000 loan to pay up-front the full cost of the solar project and started making payments in November.

"I was pumped," Feeser said.

But week after week, he couldn't get a

straight answer on when work would start.

In February, he learned AEOS Energy had shuttered its Tempe office and the company's phone number was disconnected.

An email from Kirkland said he was "hopeful for a resolution." But a letter from the company's lawyers told Feeser the company would not repay him.

Feeser filed complaints with the Arizona Attorney General's Office and the Arizona Registrar of Contractors, which regulates construction companies.

The registrar investigated and held a hearing last month that determined "AEOS Energy Inc. abandoned its ... residential contracts by failing to install any solar panels and in some cases, failed to do any work, despite being paid in full," the agency said in a statement. "The (license) revocation will take effect on May 14, 2019."

Kirkland did not return messages sent to the company's website or to a cellphone associated with him. A person who answered a phone number listed on the company's license said he had cut ties with Kirkland months ago.

Feeser hopes he will receive some money back from the Registrar of Con-

tractors recovery fund, which reimburses victims of contractor scams from license fees.

But that process can take up to a year. Feeser is worried he'll be stuck paying more than \$250 a month on a loan for solar panels that were never installed at the same time summer utility bills start to climb.

Although "God's been providing," as parishioners have helped financially, Feeser said, he doesn't want to depend on them long-term.

After this experience, he recommends solar customers check the license of any contractor, never pay the full cost before work starts, and make sure deadlines are written into the contract.

"It's one of those things you would never expect," Feeser said. "To take out (a loan) this big and get basically scammed, it's a huge disappointment."

Reporter Rebekah L. Sanders investigates issues of fraud and abuse involving businesses, health-care entities and government agencies. Contact her at [rsanders@azcentral.com](mailto:rsanders@azcentral.com) or follow her on Twitter at [@RebekahLSanders](https://twitter.com/RebekahLSanders).

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