

# Navigating the Regulatory Landscape: Essential Permits for Solar Module Manufacturing in the UAE

A factual, expert-level overview of the regulatory landscape for establishing an automated solar module production facility in the United Arab Emirates.

**Content Partner: J. v. G. technology GmbH**

*Turnkey solar module production lines — since 1997*

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# Technical Overview: Essential Solar Manufacturing Permits in the UAE



Created as part of the PVKnowHow Knowledge Network



Prepared by J.v.G. Technology GmbH



European specialists in turnkey solar module production lines

# Key Project Data

## UAE

**Region**

United Arab Emirates —  
industrial setup focus

## Auto

**Line Type**

Automated solar module  
production line

## 6–12mo


**Ramp-Up**

Licensing and approval  
timeline estimate

## GW+

**Market Scale**

UAE installed solar capacity:  
~7.9 GW (2024), targeting 36  
GW by 2029

 Scale: Solar module manufacturing facility · Investment focus: UAE industrial setup · Source: PVKnowHow / J.v.G. Technology GmbH

# UAE Strategic Context for Solar Manufacturing

## National Drivers

- UAE Energy Strategy 2050: 50% clean energy target
- Net Zero by 2050 national initiative
- Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050: 75% clean power goal
- Operation 300bn: federal industrial growth programme

## Investor Opportunity

- Solar market valued at 11.0 TWh (2024); projected 73.5 TWh by 2033
- Strategic location: crossroads of MENA, Europe, and Asia trade routes
- Strong "Made in UAE" recognition for export markets
- Potential tariff advantages for US and EU export markets

# Mainland vs. Free Zone: The Foundational Decision

Criterion	Mainland (DED / MOIAT)	Free Zone (e.g., JAFZA, KIZAD)
Foreign Ownership	100% now permitted for most industrial activities	100% always permitted
UAE Market Access	Unrestricted — direct sales and govt. tenders	Requires local distributor; 5% customs duty applies
Export Orientation	Possible; additional trade docs may apply	Preferred — customs-free, streamlined logistics
Customs on Machinery	Standard duties may apply (exemptions available)	Full exemption on imported equipment
Regulatory Authority	Emirate DED + federal laws (MOIAT)	Zone-specific authority; independent regulations
Licensing Speed	Multi-agency process; more steps	Often one-stop-shop; faster initial setup

📌 Key zones for solar manufacturing: Jebel Ali Free Zone (JAFZA), Khalifa Industrial Zone Abu Dhabi (KIZAD), Dubai Industrial City (DIC — mainland)

# Industrial Licensing: The Core Permit

## What It Is

- Foundational permit authorising manufacturing activity
- Issued by DED (mainland) or Free Zone Authority
- Governed by Federal Decree-Law No. 25 of 2022 (MOIAT / Operation 300bn)
- Annual renewal; contingent on ongoing compliance

## Application Requirements

- Detailed business plan: scope, machinery, factory layout
- Trade name registration and initial DED/zone approval
- Memorandum of Association (mainland)
- Industrial zone or warehouse with approved zoning

## Key Costs & Timelines

- Industrial licence fee: approx. AED 18,000 (mainland baseline)
- Additional costs: facility size, power requirements, visas
- MOIAT-compliant operations unlock customs exemptions and preferential utility tariffs
- Licences require annual renewal at ~50–70% of initial cost


# Environmental Approvals: Non-Negotiable Step

## Regulatory Bodies

- Ministry of Climate Change & Environment (MOCCA) — federal level
- Emirate-level environmental authority (e.g., Dubai Municipality, EAD Abu Dhabi)
- MOIAT review for industrial compliance under Operation 300bn
- Processing time: typically 4–8 weeks; cost range AED 5,000–30,000+

## EIA Key Requirements for a Solar Factory

- Waste management: broken glass, EVA/backsheet scrap, chemical containers
- Chemical handling: encapsulant materials, flux, cleaning agents
- Emissions controls and ventilation documentation
- Water usage and effluent disposal plans
- Emirate-specific procedures and portals differ between Dubai and Abu Dhabi

 Environmental clearance is mandatory for any industrial project. Incomplete EIA submissions are a leading cause of approval delays.

# Civil Defense Compliance

## Regulatory Basis

- UAE Fire and Life Safety Code of Practice – mandatory for all industrial facilities
- No factory may operate without Civil Defense (DCD) clearance
- DCD approval and Municipality building approval are directly linked
- File review: ~10 days; full process: 1–2 months if submissions are complete

## Factory Design Requirements

- Approved fire alarm and suppression systems (sprinklers, FM-200, etc.)
- Clearly marked emergency exits and evacuation routes
- Proper storage protocols for flammable or chemical materials
- Risk assessment documentation for machinery and production processes

## Critical Practice Note

- Civil defense codes must be embedded in factory design from day one
- Retrofitting fire safety systems post-construction causes significant delays and cost
- An experienced turnkey manufacturing partner typically integrates these codes into initial facility design
- Cost range: AED 2,000–15,000 (varies by facility scale)

# Municipality Permits & Utility Infrastructure

## Municipality Building Permit

- Required for any new construction or significant facility modification
- Issued by local municipality (Dubai Municipality, Abu Dhabi City Municipality) or Free Zone Authority
- Reviews: architectural, structural, and MEP (Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing) drawings
- Compliance with local building codes and land-use zoning regulations
- Processing time: typically 3–6 weeks

## Utility Connection Approvals

- Separate applications to local provider: DEWA (Dubai) or ADDC (Abu Dhabi)
- Solar module production lines are power-intensive — laminators, stringers, testers
- Early engagement with utility provider is essential to confirm available load capacity
- Free zones often provide competitively priced and reliable industrial power supply
- Water connection and sewage/effluent approvals required separately

# Product Certification: ESMA and International Standards

## UAE National Standards (ESMA)

- Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology (ESMA) sets national product standards
- Solar modules supplied to UAE grid projects must satisfy DEWA certification requirements
- DEWA publishes an approved equipment list; compliance is contractually required for grid-tied projects
- Equipment must comply with DEWA Standards for Distributed Renewable Resources Generators

## International Certifications


- IEC 61215 (crystalline silicon) and IEC 61730 (safety) are market-access prerequisites
- Achieving IEC standards typically facilitates a smoother path to local UAE certification
- TÜV, UL, or equivalent third-party certification required for export markets
- Factory quality systems (ISO 9001) support certification audit readiness

## In-Country Value (ICV)

- Government procurement contracts increasingly include ICV scoring requirements
- Local manufacturing status provides advantage in government and utility tenders
- MOIAT "Make it in the Emirates" programme aligns with ICV objectives

# Regulatory Approval Timeline

- 1 — Months 1–2 — Company Formation & Industrial Licence**  
Trade name registration, DED/Free Zone initial approval, business plan submission, Industrial Licence application
- 2 — Months 2–4 — Site & Environmental Approvals**  
Industrial zone land allocation or lease; Municipality building permit application; Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) submission to MOCCAE / emirate authority
- 3 — Months 3–5 — Civil Defense & Utility Applications**  
Civil Defense NOC and design review; utility load application to DEWA or ADDC; MEP drawing submission to Municipality
- 4 — Months 5–9 — Construction & Parallel Inspections**  
Factory construction; Civil Defense site inspection; Municipality Building Completion Certificate process; utility connection commissioning
- 5 — Months 9–12 — Final Permits & Pre-Production**  
Operating permit issued; production line installation and commissioning; product certification audits; trial production run

 A prudent investor should budget 6 to 12 months for the entire licensing and approval phase, from company registration to receiving the final operating permit. — Source: PVKnowHow

# Common Pitfalls & How to Avoid Them

## Incomplete Documentation

- EIA or building permit submitted without all required supporting files
- Each resubmission adds weeks to the timeline
- Prepare all technical documents — facility layout, ventilation, safety systems — before first submission

## Jurisdictional Assumptions

- Assuming a Free Zone licence covers all permits is a frequent and costly error
- Civil Defense and environmental ministry approvals are almost always required separately
- Emirate-specific portals and review timelines vary — do not assume uniformity

## Coordination Failures

- Misalignment between building contractor, equipment supplier, and regulatory consultant
- Design elements that fail Civil Defense or municipal codes discovered late in construction
- Utility load requirements not confirmed before site selection — insufficient power capacity

# Strategic Investor Considerations

1

## Setup Decision First

Mainland vs. Free Zone choice determines ownership, tax exposure, market access, and the applicable regulatory authority — resolve this before any permit process begins

2

## Regulatory Readiness

A well-prepared project with a bankable business plan aligned to "Make it in the Emirates" objectives will generally secure faster approvals and access to government support mechanisms

3

## Turnkey Partnership Value

An experienced European turnkey manufacturing concept integrates civil defense codes, utility requirements, and product certification readiness into initial factory design — reducing rework risk and approval delays

- ❏ A serious investor should begin with thorough due diligence on the Mainland vs. Free Zone decision and a realistic project timeline that accounts for all approval processes. — Source: PVKnowHow

# Permit Checklist: Solar Module Manufacturing in the UAE

Permit / Approval	Issuing Authority	Typical Timeline
Trade Name & Initial Approval	DED or Free Zone Authority	1-2 weeks
Industrial Licence	DED (mainland) / Free Zone Authority	2-4 weeks (post-docs)
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	MOCCAEE + Emirate authority	4-8 weeks
Municipality Building Permit	Dubai Municipality / Abu Dhabi Municipality / FZ	3-6 weeks
Civil Defense NOC & Final Approval	Directorate General of Civil Defense	4-8 weeks
Utility Connection (Power / Water)	DEWA (Dubai) / ADDC (Abu Dhabi)	4-12 weeks
ESMA / Product Certification	ESMA / accredited test laboratory	Parallel to construction
Final Operating Permit	DED / Free Zone + all authorities	Upon all approvals cleared

**Total estimated timeline:** 6-12 months from company registration to first production. Complexity, document readiness, and emirate jurisdiction are the primary variables.

# About the Content Partner

## **J. v. G. technology GmbH** – The DESERT Company

Founded in 1997 in Bavaria, Germany. Family-owned engineering company specializing in turnkey solar module production lines.

More than 90 factory projects delivered worldwide.

On-site team training included – no prior manufacturing experience required.

### Key areas:

Turnkey PV manufacturing lines | DESERT Technology® |  
TÜV-certified module designs | Factory planning to production

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Source:

<https://www.pvknowhow.com/countries/uae/solar-manufacturing-uae-permits>

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