

New York Sues Solar Panel Firm, Saying It Bilked Hundreds of Customers

The city is demanding about \$20 million in penalties and restitution from Radiant Solar, the largest sum it has ever sought from a home improvement contractor.



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By **Andy Newman**

Jan. 28, 2026

Arthur Klein first suspected something was amiss with the solar panel system on his house in Queens when he noticed that it was being installed facing the wrong way — west, not south to catch maximum sunlight.

Lorna Wynter, a schoolteacher in Brooklyn, received a “welcome letter” congratulating her for taking out a \$37,000 loan, arranged by a solar panel company, that she said she had never applied for.

In the Bronx, Eroid Williams, a retired carpenter, watched in dismay as workers installing solar panels damaged his roof; it later collapsed, and the company refused to pay the \$15,000 cost of a replacement, he said.

According to New York City’s Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, these homeowners were just three of more than 300 victims of the same company, Radiant Solar, which left a trail of damaged homes, large debts and broken promises across the city.

Late last week, the department sued Radiant Solar and its owner, William James Bushell, demanding \$18 million in restitution and about \$1.7 million in penalties — the largest sum the city has ever sought from a home improvement contractor.

The city contends that Radiant Solar engaged in a dizzying array of mechanical and monetary malfeasance for years. According to the lawsuit, filed with the city's Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings, Radiant's solar panel systems often failed to deliver the energy savings it had advertised and sometimes did not work at all.

The company padded loans with hefty and undisclosed kickbacks to lenders, failed to see projects through to approval by the city and did not file paperwork for customers to receive tax credits, the suit says. It also ran a bogus sweepstakes for a new Tesla, according to the suit.

Radiant repeatedly signed people up for loans without their consent, the city claims, saddling them with monthly payments of hundreds of dollars for years. "A more blatant form of deception is hard to imagine," the lawsuit says.

It was able to do so in part because home solar energy systems are complicated, expensive things — they often cost around \$50,000 — typically involving layers of financing and tax incentives that leave many consumers confused. The city says that in addition to ripping off homeowners, Radiant undermined the efforts of the city and state governments to shift to cleaner energy.

"Radiant Solar and William James Bushell exploited New Yorkers looking to lower their energy costs and protect our environment," Sam Levine, the consumer protection commissioner, said in a statement.

Recently, Radiant has lowered its profile. City officials said they did not know whether Radiant was still in business. The company's website is offline and its listed number is disconnected. Multiple attempts to contact Mr. Bushell went unanswered, and his lawyer, Eden P. Quainton, did not respond to requests for comment on the city's accusations.

Altogether, the city is charging Radiant with at least 3,150 violations of city administrative codes and rules. Some of the alleged offenses are technical and arcane. Others are more straightforward. They include, for instance, 45 violations for “failing to perform work in a skillful and competent manner.” The suit also accuses Radiant of 143 counts of falsely advertising an A+ rating from the Better Business Bureau (its current rating is an F). Radiant’s projects, the city says, failed inspections by the city’s Buildings Department no fewer than 50 times.

Kyle Fowler, the consumer protection department’s staff counsel, said the city began receiving complaints about Radiant in 2021. “We started investigating and reaching out to consumers, and it turned into a Russian-doll-type situation, where the more we looked, the more we kept seeing,” he said.

According to the lawsuit, one customer signed up for Radiant’s services after being promised a \$40,000 rebate to offset the cost of the installation. He later learned that he was ineligible.

A Radiant salesman asked for another prospect’s ID and Social Security number, implying “that he was merely determining whether she was eligible for solar services,” the suit says. Instead, he used the information to apply for a loan after rushing her to sign the application without properly explaining it. When her system stopped working, Radiant ghosted her, the suit says.

The Radiant crew installing another customer’s system “carelessly threw roof tiles” onto a skylight, broke it and refused to fix it, the suit states.

Mr. Williams, 81, said the Radiant salesman who came to his home had promised a zero electricity bill.

“We were getting \$300 bills before the system was installed,” Mr. Williams said. “My last bill was for over \$400. Something is wrong.”

Mr. Klein, 61, a construction superintendent who lives in the Kew Gardens Hills neighborhood, said that when his system stopped working a year after its installation because a part failed, Radiant would not replace it. The technician he

hired to fix the issue told him that a separate problem had knocked out half his panels.

Mr. Klein later fixed it himself. He then went on Yelp and left a review.

“I can’t even get the NYC property rebate for the installed system,” he wrote in 2023. “Find a better company.”

A correction was made on Jan. 28, 2026: Because of outdated information provided by the City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, an earlier version of this article misstated the number of violations a solar energy company is accused of committing. The company is charged with at least 3,150 violations, including 143 counts of falsely advertising an A+ rating from the Better Business Bureau, not 3,448 violations and 441 counts of falsely advertising the A+ rating.

When we learn of a mistake, we acknowledge it with a correction. If you spot an error, please let us know at corrections@nytimes.com. [Learn more](#)

Andy Newman writes about New Yorkers facing difficult situations, including homelessness, poverty and mental illness. He has been a journalist for more than three decades.

A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 20 of the New York edition with the headline: New York City Sues Solar Panel Company, Saying It Cheated Customers