

Affected Products: All Blue Sky Energy charge controllers

Purpose: Guidelines for PV Module selection

Background:

PV modules are available in a variety of voltage, current and power ratings. For safety, charge controller reliability and proper battery charging, PV modules must be properly matched to the charge controller and battery. This technical bulletin clarifies key PV module specifications and provides guidelines for proper PV module selection. Note that modules must be properly sized for voltage, current and power.



➤ **WARNING:** To reduce the risk of fire or personal injury photovoltaic charge controllers must be installed in accordance with National Electrical Code (NEC), ANSI/NFPA 70. This technical bulletin serves as an application guide only and is not intended to identify all installation and safety requirements for a photovoltaic electric system. For the purpose of PV module selection, use only the PV module manufacturers published specifications conducted at Standard Test Conditions (STC) per ASTM E1036. STC specifies a 25°C cell temperature and illumination of 1kW/m² at a spectral distribution of AM 1.5 (ASTM E892 global spectral irradiance).

PV Modules:

PV modules are essentially energy converters which convert light into electricity. Because the voltage, current and power produced by a given PV module varies widely based on actual operating conditions, a set of test conditions commonly referred to as **Standard Test Conditions** or **STC** has been developed to rate modules in a meaningful and consistent manner. STC ratings not only provide a fair means to compare one manufacturers modules against another, most importantly STC ratings provide standardized performance data against which actual real world performance can be predicted.

Key PV module specifications;

P_{MAX}	Maximum power in watts ($P_{MAX} = V_{MP} \times I_{MP}$)
V_{OC}	Open circuit voltage (maximum voltage with module output open circuit)
V_{MP}	Voltage at which module produces greatest power (also called Operating Voltage)
I_{MP}	Current at which module produces greatest power (also called Operating Current)
I_{SC}	Short circuit current (maximum current with module output short circuited)

It is important to note that STC ratings are not “maximum” or “optimal” ratings, and that voltage, current and power will be higher or lower based on actual operating conditions. Conditions can be present where V_{OC} and I_{SC} can approach 1.25 times STC ratings which is why our recommendations call for 1.25 voltage and current derating. Note that the SC30 calls for a lower 1.12 current derating factor due to its automatic current limit and lack of MPPT current boost. While voltage and current can spike to nearly 1.25 times STC ratings, in typical real world operation I_{MP} is commonly only about 70 – 80% of I_{MP} at STC.

Solar Boost MPPT charge controllers will provide the best MPPT current boost performance if all PV modules are identical. If module types are mixed, DO NOT place dissimilar modules in series. Dissimilar modules in parallel should be of the same cell count (e.g., 36, 60, 72, etc.), have V_{MP} values within $\approx 0.5V$ or better for 36 cell 12V modules, and be of the same basic cell technology or have a similar temperature coefficient of V_{MP} so the V_{MP} of the various modules will tend to track each other as operating conditions change.

If module types are very different consider using a separate charge controller for each module type to obtain the best MPPT current boost performance. Multiple controllers on Blue Sky Energy’s IPN Network is an ideal way to obtain the best possible PV performance and battery charge performance from very dissimilar modules.

PV Module Voltage Sizing:

► Maximum V_{OC} Limit:

Do not connect a total PV V_{OC} at STC greater than the controller's absolute maximum PV input voltage rating divided by 1.25. Real world operating conditions may be present where actual V_{OC} approaches 1.25 times the published STC rating. Application of PV voltage in excess of the charge controller's absolute maximum PV voltage rating will damage the controller and void the warranty.

► Minimum V_{MP} Limit:

A 36 cell PV module thought of as a typical 12V nominal module has V_{MP} and V_{OC} at STC ratings of about 17.5 V and 22.0V respectively. This seemingly high V_{MP} at STC value is necessary because actual V_{MP} drops as PV cell temperature rises. The 17.5V V_{MP} at STC rating assures that in hot climates actual V_{MP} will remain sufficiently high enough to properly charge a 12V battery.

To obtain good charge performance a rule of thumb is to not select a PV module with a V_{MP} of less than 16.5V to charge a 12V battery. 12V PV modules with a somewhat higher V_{MP} in the range of 17.5V – 18.5V will provide improved MPPT[®] and battery charge performance. However higher voltage is not always better in that some charge controllers can process less PV power if nominal PV voltage is greater than nominal battery voltage as shown on page 3 of this document. These voltage numbers should be multiplied by 2X or 4X for 24V or 48V batteries.

Using the table below for the particular charge controller and battery voltage, select PV modules that have both;
 1) Total series V_{OC} at STC not greater than the "Recommended Max. Applied PV V_{OC} @ STC" value, and
 2) Total series V_{MP} value not less than the minimum value shown in "Recommended range of V_{MP} at STC".



Solar Boost Controller	Battery Voltage	Absolute Max. PV Input Voltage Rating ②	Recommended Maximum PV V_{OC} @ STC	Recommended range of V_{MP} at STC (Typical range of V_{MP} for Nominal PV voltage and PV cell count)				
				12V Nominal 36 cell	18V Nominal 60 cell	24V Nominal 72 cell	36V Nominal 2x 60 cell	48V Nominal 2x 72 cell
SC30	12V	30V	24V	16.5 – 18.5V	X	X	X	X
SB2000E	12V	30V	24V	16.5 – 18.5V	X	X	X	X
SB3000i	12V	50V	40V	16.5 – 18.5V	23.0 – 31.0V	X	X	X
SB2512i(X)	12V	35V	28V	16.5 – 18.5V	X	X	X	X
SB2512i(X)-HV	12V	50V	40V	16.5 – 18.5V	23.0 – 31.0V	X	X	X
SB3024i – and – SB3024iL	12V	57V	45.6V	16.5 – 18.5V	23.0 – 31.0V	33.0 – 37.0V	X	X
	24V			X	X	33.0 – 37.0V	X	X
SB1524iX	12V	57V	45.6V	16.5 – 18.5V	23.0 – 31.0V	33.0 – 37.0V	X	X
	24V			X	X	33.0 – 37.0V	X	X
SB50	12V	57V	45.6V	16.5 – 18.5V	23.0 – 31.0V ^③	33.0 – 37.0V	X	X
	24V			X	X	33.0 – 37.0V	X	X
SB3048	24V	140V	112V	X	X	33.0 – 37.0V	46.0 – 62.0V ^③	66.0- 80.0V
	48V			X	X	X	X	66.0- 80.0V

PV Module Current & Power Sizing:

► Maximum PV I_{SC} & Power Limit:

Do not connect total PV module I_{SC} at STC greater than the controller's output current rating divided by 1.25 for Solar Boost™ charge controllers, or 1.12 for the Sun Charger 30. Real world operating conditions may be present where I_{SC} will exceed the published STC value. The purpose of current derating is to prevent the controller from becoming damaged due to excess PV current or power. These derating values assume battery voltage and PV voltage are the same nominal value (e.g., 12V battery with a 36 cell module). If nominal PV voltage is greater than nominal battery voltage it is easier to use maximum PV power rather than I_{SC} . Increasing PV voltage does not increase a charge controller's power handling capability. In certain cases as shown below higher PV voltage lowers the maximum power a controller can process.

► Minimum Recommended PV Power:

A rule of thumb for proper battery charging is that there be at least 50 – 60W of PV power producing about 3.0 – 3.5A of charge current per 100 amp-hours of battery capacity. An absolute minimum with little or no loads is about 25W or 1.5 amps of charge current per 100 amp-hours.

Select the maximum number PV modules that will not exceed “Maximum Short Circuit Current I_{SC} at STC” or “Maximum Applied Total PV Power @ STC”.



Solar Boost Controller	Nominal Battery voltage	Maximum Applied Total PV Power @ STC	Max. Controller Output Current Rating	Maximum Short Circuit Current I_{SC} at STC (At Nominal PV voltage and PV cell count)				
				12V Nominal 36 cell	18V Nominal 60 cell	24V Nominal 72 cell	36V Nominal 2x 60 cell	48V Nominal 2x 72 cell
SC30	12V	450W	30A	27A	X	X	X	X
SB2000E	12V	340W	25A	20A	X	X	X	X
SB3000i	12V	400W ④	30A ④	24A	X	X	X	X
		290W	22A	X	11.8A	X	X	X
SB2512i(X)	12V	340W	25A	20A	X	X	X	X
SB2512i(X)-HV	12V	340W ④	25A ④	20A	X	X	X	X
		270W	20A	X	11A	X	X	X
SB3024i	12V	400W	30A	24A	16A	12A	X	X
	24V	800W		X	X	24A	X	X
SB3024iL	12V	540W ④	40A ④	32A ④	X	X	X	X
	12V	400W	30A	X	16A	12A	X	X
	24V	800W		X	X	24A	X	X
SB1524iX	12V	270W ④	20A ④	16A ④	X	X	X	X
	12V	200W	15A	X	8A	6A	X	X
	24V	400W		X	X	12A	X	X
SB50	12V	670W	50A	40A	26.7A	20A	X	X
	24V	1340W		X	X	40A	X	X
SB3048	24V	800W	30A	X	X	24A	16A	12A
	48V	1600W		X	X	X	X	24A

① See “What is MPPT” at www.blueskyenergyinc.com.

② The maximum PV input voltage is a hard limit above which the controller will be damaged in a manner that voids the warranty.

③ These modules can be used but a one time special MPPT trim between the high and low ranges is required.

④ Current limit and current rating are higher when charging a 12V battery from 36 cell nominal 12V PV modules. If PV V_{oc} ever exceeds 30V (i.e., >12V nominal PV modules) current rating and current limit switch to the lower value until the unit reboots.