

# Totally Tubular

TUBULAR SKYLIGHTS PROVIDE ECO-FRIENDLY TRANSFORMATIONS TO A HOME



**ALSO KNOWN AS SOLAR TUBES, TUBULAR SKYLIGHTS ARE “YOUR WINDOWS ON THE ROOF.”**

“A tubular skylight allows natural light in to brighten rooms during the day without the need for an electrical light source,” explains Jovane Estrada, general manager for Chandler-based Elite Solar Lighting & Fans ([EliteSolarSystems.com](http://EliteSolarSystems.com)).

“They can be retrofitted into any existing roof system—pitched or flat, metal, tile, shingle or shaker—and can be placed where windows or traditional skylights are not options,” he adds.

Installed properly, they change spaces and, with that, the vitality of your home. The lifestyles of pets, plants and people are improved because of the influx of Arizona desert sunlight. A forbiddingly dark hallway disappears; a kitchen brightly welcomes you, family and friends; bathrooms, bedrooms, hallways and closets are enlivened. A garage can even be brightened to make car maintenance and repair easier, and even two-story homes and basements can be fitted by means of tubing elbows.

First-generation solar skylights brought in light, but also heat; in the 100-plus desert

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PHOTOGRAPHY JOVANE ESTRADA**



summer, this could increase cooling costs. You received utilitarian benefits but you paid the utility company for it.

Today's finest warrantied and certified products, however, combine durability with multi-layer acrylic diffusers that significantly cut UV rays and heat gain and increase energy retention compared with earlier versions. They meet direct overhead sunlight with robust energy-efficient materials and insights.

In 2001, Elite Solar Lighting & Fans began manufacturing high-quality residential and commercial tubular skylights, solar attic fans, and garage exhaust fans. Last year, its parent company, Southwest Metal Spinning, celebrated its 25th-anniversary in the East Valley. Founded by Estrada's father Saul and brother Juan, the company builds the premium aluminum components for Elite products at the same Chandler location.

Typical tubular skylight components include a high-impact acrylic dome, which locks into a ring on industrial-level aluminum flashing; this seals to a flat or pitched rooftop, protecting against rain and cracking. Beneath this, an acrylic diffusing lens connects to highly reflective anodized tubing leading to the ceiling, where it fits into a triple-layer polycarbonate diffuser.

Elite, for example, offers a variety of interior kits, but most homeowners select units for drywall installation in 6-inch to 24-inch diameters. Options include security bars; nightlight and dimmer kits; and three diffusers, a standard Prismatic, MaxLum for the widest dispersion and a White Diffuser for softer light, excellent for bathrooms and bedrooms. Elite also offers solar bathroom and garage exhaust vent kits and attic fans. And, ENERGY STAR® models are also available.

Compared to conventional skylights, they're an economical alternative. An installed tubular skylight will be \$530 to \$1,115, while a traditional skylight can run \$950 to \$3,000-plus.

Additionally, quality tubular skylights offer superior UV protection, which inhibits fading of interiors. From the roof, solar gain is reduced, and, on the inside, energy loss is reduced. And, by using free natural light, less artificial light is needed, so your home's power needs are reduced. Eco-conscious homeowners will also appreciate that Southwest Metal Spinning and Elite recycle the scrap aluminum.

A few years ago, Chandler's Nick and Theresa Drake asked Elite to help make their great room benefit from Arizona light, so they added a tubular skylight and even benefitted from a federal tax credit, which is available until 2021. "The family room is now very bright during the day," Nick says, "and with the solar light feature we added, the room has a soft glow at night."