

# Thinking about rooftop solar?



*Here are some considerations from your local utility to help you in the process...*

## **General Considerations**

### **Efficiency First**

Before installing solar panels on your roof, make your home as energy efficient as possible. The more energy-efficient your home, the less solar you have to install.

### **Leasing vs. Buying**

Be sure you fully understand the costs and risks of buying vs. leasing. For example, you may not be able to transfer leased rooftop solar panels when you sell your home, especially if the new owner doesn't want them.

### **Contact Your Local Utility**

An interconnection agreement to the local electric grid may be required for safety and reliability purposes. Contact your local utility early in the process.

### **Know the Net Metering Policy**

If your solar generation produces more electricity than your home uses, you may be issued credits through net metering from your local utility. Know the projected payback costs before committing to your project.

### **Understand the Savings, Costs and Payback**

Look at your electric bill now. Calculate how much you are likely to save by producing your own solar electricity vs. the cost of the installation and how long your payback might be. Your local utility can assist you in this process.

## **Cost Considerations**

- What financial assumptions regarding utility costs were used when determining life-cycle benefits of the installation?
- What assumptions regarding continuation and terms of net metering were used in determining life-cycle benefits of the installation?
  - What rate will be credited (through net metering) by your local utility for excess electricity generated to the grid?
- What federal and/or state financial incentives/subsidies are available to help with the cost of a system? Your state energy office is a good contact for this information.

## **Selecting a Dealer/Installer Considerations**

- Select a reputable, professional contractor with experience installing solar PV systems.
- It's a good idea to get more than one bid for a project.
- How many years of experience does the company have installing solar PV systems?
- Has the company installed electric grid-connected PV systems? If not, has it installed electric grid-independent (stand alone) PV systems?
- Is the company properly licensed?
- Does the company have any pending or active judgments or liens against it?

## **Leasing Considerations**

- What is the installed cost comparison between leasing vs. owning?
- Can you buy the system before the end of the lease term?
- Who owns the system at the end of the lease?
- Who owns any renewable energy credits associated with the system?
- Who pays to remove it and repair the roof at the end of the lease?
- Who pays taxes on it, including any increase in property taxes?
- If you decide to sell your property, what happens to the lease and installation?
- If there are damages to the system or a catastrophic loss, who pays for repair?

## ***Other Considerations (Warranty, Insurance, Maintenance, etc.)***

- Is your home or business a good place for a solar PV system?
  - Does the site provide clear, unobstructed access to the sun's rays for most of the day all year round?
  - Is the site free from tree shading, nearby buildings or other obstructions?
- Does your roof contain a large enough area for the system?
- Who is responsible for obtaining permits and authorizations?
- Who is responsible for post-installation roof inspection and repair?
- Who is responsible should there be any structural damage caused by the installation?
- Who is responsible for any ceiling damage caused by the installation?
- Who is responsible should there be any injuries to the crew or public during installation?
- Are there any homeowner's association covenants or restrictions regarding installing a rooftop solar system?
- Who is responsible for removal and reinstallation of the system when your roof needs to be replaced or repaired?
- What are the terms of the warranty of the system?
- What is the process to repairs under the warranty? Does the homeowner coordinate repairs or the installer/dealer?
- What are the consequences if there is a warranty issue and the installer goes out of business?
- What are the consequences if there is a hardware warranty issue and the hardware manufacturer goes out of business?
- Who is responsible for the lien disclosure, if any?
- What are the insurance requirements to have a system on your home?
- Who is responsible for fulfilling applicable electric codes for existing/new wiring?
- What is the process if the installer or inspector needs access to your home?
- Who is responsible for ensuring the installation meets any applicable fire department policies?
- Who is responsible for ongoing maintenance and what are the maintenance standards?
- Who controls the customer data derived from the installation?

## ***Additional Resources***

The following online resources provide more information regarding solar power and energy efficiency:

**American Solar Energy Society** - [www.ases.org](http://www.ases.org)

**Building America Solution Center (U.S. Dept. of Energy)** - <https://basc.pnnl.gov>

**Iowa Utilities Board** - <https://iub.iowa.gov/on-site-generation>

**Energy Star (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)** - [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)

**National Renewable Energy Laboratory** - [www.nrel.gov](http://www.nrel.gov)

**Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency** - [www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org)

**U.S. Dept. of Energy** - [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov) or [www.solar.energy.gov](http://www.solar.energy.gov)

**Solar Energy Industries Association** - [www.seia.org](http://www.seia.org)