

Shining the light on SOLAR for your home



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Solar has been one of the fastest-growing renewable energy sources over the past decade. The cooperative has had an increase in members reaching out via social media and direct calls, asking for information about adding solar to their home. With continually evolving technology, many members are wondering if solar power is a good choice for their home.

We recommend members investigate their energy use and consider potential

efficiency upgrades before starting the process of adding solar power to their home. Members should be aware of their total electricity use and first, consider lower-cost and easy-to-implement efficiency measures before choosing solar. Making the home more energy efficient will reduce the size requirements of the solar equipment.

I recommend exploring all the resources the cooperative has to offer to reduce electric consumption. Energy efficiency upgrades, such as adding insulation, often have a much faster payback than installing solar equipment. Home energy audits are the most efficient and cost-effective method to help homeowners determine where their homes are losing energy and money. Midwest Electric offers both a free, general audit and a more intensive \$200 audit with a blower door test and infrared camera (cost reimbursed if the member implements the suggestions made afterward).

Following the energy audit, we will provide a full report with recommendations for energy efficiency improvements. Contact the cooperative to schedule an appointment.

More ways to save

- **Appliances and electronics** — Use your appliances and electronics more efficiently or consider investing in highly efficient products. The cooperative offers rebates on new ENERGY STAR®-rated appliances (like refrigerators and stand-alone freezers) that can save up to 20 percent off the cost of operating the older appliance.
- **Lighting** — Switch to energy-efficient lighting, such as LED bulbs. They use at least 75 percent less energy and last 25 times longer than incandescent bulbs.
- **Heating and cooling** — If you use electricity to heat

and cool your home, your heating and cooling needs will significantly affect the amount of solar energy you need. Weatherizing your home and operating the heating and cooling system more efficiently will reduce the amount of electricity you will need a solar installation to produce. The cooperative offers rebates up to \$200 for insulation and air sealing and \$500 for heating systems. Visit www.midwestrec.com > My Home > Rebates for all the details.

Understand the incentives

The purchase of a small solar energy system is eligible for a 30 percent federal tax credit through 2019. The tax credit decreases to 26 percent in 2020, then to 22 percent in 2021, and expires on Dec. 31, 2021. If you opt for a solar equipment lease, consider that you will not be eligible for this tax benefit, since you will not own the solar energy system. However, you will want to explore whether you get all or part of this tax benefit applied to your base rate. You can search for additional state, local, or utility incentives on the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency (DSIRE).

IMPORTANT NOTE: Solar equipment that is NOT supplied under an equipment purchase or lease agreement but instead is an agreement to purchase electricity from the solar provider will not be permitted on the cooperative's electric system. This is because it would be a retail sale of electricity in violation of Ohio's certified electric service territory law.

The investment and net metering

Renewable energy systems involve a significant initial investment. The length of the payback period depends greatly on the system that you choose and your home's setup. It is essential to contact us early and to review the cooperative's distribution generation policies prior to starting any solar installation to avoid costly mistakes. While we currently offer "Net Metering" and pay a retail price for your renewable energy, we will soon switch to a wholesale price that is fair to all members.

For more information about renewable energy systems, call 1-800-962-3830 or email info@midwestrec.com.

