



# East Central

## ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

### 10 Steps To Take Before Installing Solar

A solar system, or photovoltaic system (PV), does make sense for some members in our service area. And since solar power generation is rapidly becoming more available, we put this information together to help answer any question you might have.



#### **1. Make your home more energy efficient before buying a solar system**

Energy efficiency upgrades such as properly insulating and weatherizing your home can cut your energy costs immediately, and you'll also be able to reduce the size of the PV system you purchase. East Central Electric offers a no charge energy audit to members to help with identifying these areas of concern. Be sure to take advantage of available rebates as well!

#### **2. Research, Research, Research before investing in a solar system.**

East Central Electric (ECE) should be your first contacts. We can help answer basic questions on how your potential system works with the electrical grid. We can provide resource materials and can send you a list of contractors our own members have used to get you started.

#### **3. Understand how a solar system works with your cooperatives system.**

Most solar systems are designed to provide you with a portion of the electricity needed, but keep in mind when rainy day or during nighttime hours, you will need more power because your system is not generating. That means you'll still be connected to your cooperative's power lines. Because these systems are grid-connected, energy can flow both ways. East Central Electric provides appropriate policies and rates for connecting solar systems to our lines and credit our members for excess generation at an avoided cost rate.

#### **4. Review your usage to determine system size**

Our staff at ECE can help review your past energy use so you can make your meetings with the solar contractor more efficient and productive.

#### **5. Tally upfront costs**

If you purchase a solar system, you will be the owner. So you will be responsible for the purchase price, installation, interconnection costs, insurance and taxes as well as ongoing maintenance and repairs. Remember, the larger the size of the solar system, the more it drives up the cost. Most systems can last up to 30 years, so make sure to ask about warranty information with your contractor. Are you doing a roof or pasture install? If installing on the home itself, take in consideration the roof condition as well. If it is close to time to replace it, you will need to complete that before seeking solar panels.





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#### **6. Search for Incentives, rebates and tax credits**

Visit [www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org) to view a clickable, interactive map, showing federal and state incentives, credits, exemptions, grants, loans, and rebates for residential and commercial/ industrial projects.

#### **7. Accept short and long term responsibilities**

If you purchase a system, you'll need to meet the requirements of ECE's interconnection agreement. You can find these requirements on our website at [www.ecoec.com/renewable-power](http://www.ecoec.com/renewable-power). After the interconnection requirements are met, and the safety and integrity of your system are approved, ECE will take care of the connection to the grid. As the owner of the system, you'll be responsible for maintenance and system repairs. If you lease a system, your responsibilities will depend on the agreement you sign.

#### **8. Follow all safety precautions**

Most solar systems are grid-connected. Because of the two-way flow of electricity, excess energy your system collects during the daytime flows into ECE's lines. Improper connection and maintenance of your system may endanger people and the reliability of the grid.

#### **9. Choose a reputable contractor/installer**

Start with a list of options from website research, local or state Better Business Bureaus, renewable energy associations, your state energy office, and your state Attorney General's office to name a few. ECE also has a list of contractors our members have used as well. Contact at least a few of those contractors appearing on your list, especially if recommended by multiple state and local experts. Once you have selected a contractor, ask a contract specialist or lawyer to review the contract before signing, if possible.



#### **10. Maintain good records**

Keep files on your pre-purchase research and pre-installation data provided by your cooperative, as well as bids, contracts, inspection reports, maintenance records, and all other details you may need to refer to in the future. In addition, you'll want to know about system performance, so set up a system to track and compare your actual system performance with predictions provided by the contractor/installer.