

Do Your Homework Before Buying That Solar Array

You might find yourself asking, "Is solar right for me?" Whether investing in solar at your home, or if you're considering installing solar, knowing the facts is imperative.

Placement of solar panels depends on many factors including sun exposure. A south-facing roof is optimal. Also, a roof that is not shaded from trees is critical. Finally, the age of the roof needs to be considered, since the panels will need to be removed for re-roofing. If your roof isn't ideal, you might consider a freestanding array, which is built on the ground and has more flexibility for placement. To get an idea of potential solar production at your location, go to pvwatts.com and enter your address. This site provides potential energy output based on location and generator size.

The next step is to decide which type of interconnection is right for you. South River EMC currently offers net metering and "buy all, sell all."

If you choose net metering, a bi-directional meter is used to read forward and reverse flow. With net metering, the priority for the solar-produced energy is in the home, but when the system is producing more power than the home consumes, the excess power flows back through the meter and onto the grid (i.e. reverse flow). This reverse flow results in an energy credit on your electric bill. Sizing appropriately is very important since there are no cash payouts, only credits. You should consider any energy efficiency upgrades before sizing. For example, replacing an old electric furnace with a high-efficiency heat pump and adding insulation will significantly cut energy use, thus lowering the size of the solar system needed. It is important to note that the reverse flow and the total solar production will not correlate since some, or all, of the solar energy is used in the home and not metered.

The other type of interconnection is "buy all, sell all." With this type interconnection, a new meter is added for the solar panels. This new meter records solar energy that is generated and the member is paid for the power produced at the Cooperative's current avoided cost. The original home electric meter is not changed.



Advise Guy Robby Talton

For many, the most critical point to consider before making a decision to go solar is economics. The easiest way to figure the economic value is to complete a simple payback calculation. You can go online to energysage.com to get competing quotes on residential solar. Once you have quotes or total cost of the solar system, divide total cost by the yearly amount of solar produced to get payback in years, potential monthly and yearly solar production can be obtained at pvwatts.com website. Remember that there is currently a 30% federal tax credit that expires in 2019, that can be deducted from the total cost. Your insurance company needs to be informed of the solar array to insure coverage, so don't forget to add any increased insurance premium to your total cost. South River EMC currently requires interconnected members to pay a \$5 month interconnection fee to help cover administrative processes born with these accounts. Now that you have all the details, you can make an informed decision on solar power.

For more information or questions, please contact Robby Talton at 910.892.8071 ext. 2152.

South River EMC
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PO Box 931
Dunn, NC 28335
910.892.8071
800.338.5530
www.sremc.com