

Solar Power for Your Home

Why we care

About one-half of the energy for our homes currently comes from coal and natural gas plants, but thanks to government incentives, now is an opportune time to replace some fossil-fuel energy with solar power.

Solar power can be used for water heating and generating electricity. A solar water heating system can save 60% of the annual energy your family uses to heat water, while a 2-kilowatt solar electric system can provide about one-third of your electricity. Also, any excess electricity goes back into the grid so you are billed only for your net electricity use.

While upfront costs can be high, financial payback is generally under ten years, and depending on rising energy costs could be as little as five. An added bonus: a solar energy system that saves \$200 annually on your utility bills should add about \$4000 to the value of your home.

Simple, positive change

- First, conserve energy by installing more insulation, sealing air leaks, and by changing energy consuming habits.
- Confirm that your roof faces south or southwest and is exposed to full sun most of the day, or inquire about free-standing panels.
- If your roof needs to be replaced, install a solar energy system at the same time. The Energy Trust incentives require 15 years of remaining roof life.
- Consider costs. After incentives, an \$8,500 installed hot water system will amount to \$4,000. A \$20,000 installed solar electric system should cost you \$5,200.
- To find a professional, see www.solaroregon.org/find-a-professional.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at info@earthleaders.org.