

10 Solar Installation Considerations

1. Implement energy efficiency first

Energy efficiency is still the best investment for the greatest savings in our area. Installing a solar energy system before you upgrade your home's energy efficiency will reduce your solar savings in the future. The best strategy is to complete all your energy efficiency upgrades, and then size your solar energy system based on the new usage for optimal savings potential.

2. Do your homework before you write the check

If you are considering investing in solar panels, talk to your electric cooperative before you begin. Find credible, reputable and skilled professionals who are knowledgeable in these systems. They can direct you to additional resources that will help you understand the economics of owning a system, including the type of renewable energy technology best for your property, as well as financing, potential incentives, and other requirements, such as insurance. Ask for the advice of others who have installed their own solar systems.

3. Get actual rates from your electric cooperative

Your trusted electric cooperative can explain the rate structure for your services, the charges likely to be incurred, and your compensation for unused excess energy generated by your system. The co-op can also walk you through interconnection agreements and purchased power policies.

4. Analyze your electric load and understand solar capabilities

Evaluate your energy usage first to determine what size and type of system you need. Record how your energy usage fluctuates throughout the day, both seasonally and throughout the year. Research when various systems produce peak energy and compare that to your current and expected energy usage. Contact your trusted energy cooperative for more information.

5. Determine the cost upfront

Do your homework before investing in a system to understand costs involved, such as installation and interconnection costs, insurance, taxes, maintenance and repair costs, as well as incentives and tax credits. Make sure your insurance will cover the system if it is damaged or stolen, and also if your system causes damage to the property of others. If panels are damaged on your roof, make sure the repair work covers the cost of removal and reinstallation of the panels, which could be in excess of \$1,000.

6. Research potential incentives and tax credits

Financial incentives, such as the Investment Tax Credit (ITC), may be available to offset your investment costs. Talk with a tax advisor and your prospective vendors to learn more. Incentives are often driven by laws or policies, have expiration dates, and can vary by type and size of system. The Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency (www.dsireusa.org) is one source of information on incentives and policies that support renewables and energy efficiency in the U.S.

For more information
call the Daviess-Martin
County REMC office at
812.295.4200



Daviess-Martin County
REMC

7. Understand your responsibilities

If you own solar panels, also referred to as a distributed generation system, you are responsible for obtaining the proper equipment and ensuring that all requirements of the electric co-op's interconnection agreement are met, including paying any necessary costs. The owner also must notify local and state officials to conduct safety inspections. Once all interconnection requirements are met and the safety and integrity of the system meet all necessary criteria, then the cooperative is responsible for the final stages of interconnection. Ongoing maintenance and system repairs are the responsibility of the owner.

8. Know safety requirements

Your electric cooperative provides electricity when your distributed generation system is not producing sufficient energy to meet your needs, which keeps member-consumers connected to the grid. Because of this connection, solar panel owners must work with their co-op to meet their requirements to keep the grid reliable and safe. All interconnection and safety requirements must be met prior to operating a solar system in parallel with the co-op's electric distribution system. This is necessary to protect other member-consumers, cooperative employees, public safety personnel and the general public from risks that could result from the improper installation of distributed generation.

9. Choose a reputable vendor

Find a reputable installer who will size the system properly and give you realistic expectations. Ask for references, check online consumer reviews, and ask for third-party input from credible resources. Refer to the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners at NABCEP.org to locate certified installers and practitioners in your area. Beware of installers who advise you not to contact your electric cooperative and are making their own forecasts about rate increases.

10. Keep thorough records

Retain all data and research that you gather, as well as information that is provided by your electric cooperative, vendors and other credible third-party sources. If you proceed with a solar panel system, you will want to track and compare actual system performance with expected performance based on vendor information.



If you have questions in your pursuit of generating energy and reducing costs with a solar system, contact Daviess-Martin County REMC for answers and more information.