

Solar Checklist

Idaho Power welcomes your interest in solar and renewable generation. To help you research your options, we've developed the following list:

Information you'll need to start

- Your goals*—How much energy you want to produce? Do you want to offset all or a portion of your energy use? Do you want a backup power source in the case of a power outage?
- Your space*—Decide on a roof- or ground-mount system and consider how much unshaded, southern-oriented space is available. Each kilowatt (kW) of solar requires approximately 100 square feet of unshaded space.
- Your monthly and annual energy use (kilowatt hours [kWh])*—Idaho Power's **myAccount** tool can help you evaluate your energy use. If possible, look at energy use (kWh) over several years to reduce irregularities from unusual weather events. Use your historical energy usage and consider future energy additions (heated pool, electric vehicle, etc.) to determine the size (kW) of system you need.
- Your budget*—How much you want to spend on your system? Do you plan to buy or finance your system? If you plan to finance, remember to factor in the interest rate on a loan. The cost of a system depends on many factors, including the type and size. Although Idaho Power does not offer incentives for this, you may qualify for federal and state tax incentives.
- Your installation*—Do you plan to install it yourself or hire a contractor? Installation requires expertise and all net-metering systems must pass an electrical inspection. Idaho Power recommends getting several bids.

Other things to consider

- Are there any restrictions from my homeowner's association, city or county?
- Will my roof warranty be affected?
- Will my homeowner's insurance premium change?

The net metering service, including the current rate structure and interconnection requirements, is subject to change and current rates do not represent a guarantee of future pricing.

Questions to ask your installer

- What size system would meet my goal?
Answer will be in kilowatts, not number of panels.
- How much energy, in kWh, will the system produce each month? Each year?
*The National Renewable Energy Laboratory's **PV Watts** program can help you estimate energy output.*
- How does that compare to my monthly energy use?
- Will anything—trees, roof lines, neighbors—shade my panels? How will that shade affect my output?
Ask your installer to do a shade analysis.
- What assumptions were made when calculating my payback date, such as:
 - Idaho Power's current cost of energy for residential customers?
Current average is 8.75 cents per kWh, but it ranges from 8 to 12 cents depending on tiers and season.
 - Idaho Power's energy cost escalation rate (the estimated percentage that rates will increase each year)?
Some solar calculators use a national average, but a more accurate annual cost escalation rate for the next 20 years ranges from 1.9 to 2.2 percent. (sources: Idaho Power's 2015 Integrated Resource Plan, Google's Project Sunroof)

- The rate the panel output will degrade and the rate the production will decrease each year over the life of the panels?
- The equipment replacement schedule?
- What kinds of maintenance costs might I be looking at?
 - What warranties are offered?
 - Who do I contact for maintenance?
 - What if I need a new roof?
- What is the process for installing a system? How long might each step take?

Connecting your system to Idaho Power's grid

There are two options for interconnecting renewable generation to Idaho Power's grid:

- 1. Net Metering:** Net Metering is the most common way for Idaho Power's customers to interconnect renewable generation to offset their own energy use. Idaho Power's Net Metering tariff allows customers to install small-scale renewable generation projects on their property and connect to Idaho Power's electrical grid. See the [Net Metering FAQs](#) for more information.
- 2. Non-Utility Generation Interconnection:** This option is available for projects that want to interconnect and sell electricity generated from a project. In order to sell generation from a project to Idaho Power, the project must be a PURPA qualifying facility (QF), sign a Generator Interconnection Agreement, and have an Energy Sales Agreement with Idaho Power. Due to the requirements and regulations associated with this option, it is less often utilized by residential or business customers.

Alternatives

- Consider [energy efficiency](#) updates for your home prior to installing your system. Lowering your energy use may allow you to install a smaller system for your home.
- If you are a renter or if solar on your property just isn't feasible for you, there are other options for supporting renewable energy. Check out Idaho Power's [Green Power Program](#) or [Community Solar Pilot Program](#).

Other resources

- Financing option information:
 - Idaho customers—[Idaho Office of Energy and Mineral Resources](#)
 - Oregon customers—[Oregon Department of Energy](#)
- Incentive information: [Database of State Incentives for Renewable Energy \(DSIRE\)](#)
- Installer information: The Idaho Office of Energy and Mineral Resources (OEMR) maintains a [list of installers](#). The OEMR allows installers to advertise on its website; however, this is not an extensive list of all installers.

Helpful Links

idahopower.com/netmetering for program information

idahopower.com/myAccount for energy usage history

pvwatts.nrel.gov to estimate system size and energy output

oregon.gov/energy to find tax credits for Oregon residents

dsireusa.org a database of state incentives for renewables

oemr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015.12.31_ID_Solar_Dev_Res.pdf for a list of solar installers