

## Solar FAQ

### **How do I know if solar is right for my house or business?**

The first step you should take in determining whether solar is right for your home or business is to personally evaluate the benefits of installing a solar system. With solar thermal systems, for example, you should take a look at your hot water bills and compare them to the price of a solar thermal hot water system, the installation cost, and then estimate the state and federal rebate amounts. Speaking with a solar installer, distributor, or manufacturer can give you an idea of how long it will take to start seeing a payback (a list of these people can be found on our website through the Solar Program page).

Photovoltaic (PV) installations require a home energy audit before you can apply for an Efficiency Maine incentive. An energy audit can alert you to things that may be less energy efficient in your home where it may be more beneficial to fix/replace them prior to installing solar PV panels.

It is also important to identify why you are installing solar thermal or PV panels. For some it's the potential energy savings, for others it's the desire to be more "green". Whether it is a financial decision, or one that has to do with Mother Nature, it is in your best interest to contact a solar professional to determine the best options for you.

### **Does anyone qualify for incentives, or are there guidelines?**

Efficiency Maine's solar incentives are open to Maine residents as funding is available. Recently, funding has been exhausted by demand, so rebates are not always available. In many cases, the economics are still attractive, especially if you consider the potential for increasing fuels costs. Don't forget that pre-approval is necessary.

### **How do I apply for a solar rebate?**

The application form is found on the Solar page of our website ([www.energymaine.com/renewable\\_programs\\_solar.htm](http://www.energymaine.com/renewable_programs_solar.htm)). You can either print out the application then fill out the required information with a pen, or type in the information and then print. Mail the completed application to Energy Federation Incorporated (EFI), 40 Washington Street Suite 2000, Westborough, MA, 01581-1012.

Within two to three weeks, provided funding is available, you will receive a reservation number for your project. The reservation number essentially reserves the money for your project and gives you 120 days to complete it. You may request an extension of another 120 days if needed. Once the project has been completed, fill out appendix "A" (this prints as part of the application) and mail with the appropriate signatures, equipment information, and a copy of all the receipts. Submittals will be examined for completeness and incentive checks will be processed in the next payment cycle (monthly). If you do not have access to the internet, we can mail the application to you.

PLEASE be sure you send in your applications form and receive a reservation number **BEFORE** you start your project, otherwise your application will be denied.

**What are the individual rebate amounts?**

- o Photovoltaic incentives are \$2.00 per watt for the first 1,000 watts, capped at \$2,000. An Energy Audit is required and a copy of the report sent with the application form.
- o Residential Thermal Incentives is 25% of the project cost or \$1,000 whichever is less.
- o Residential Thermal “ENERGY STAR” Incentives is 25% of the project costs or \$1,500 whichever is less.
- o Residential Thermal “Maine Home Performance” is 25% of the project costs or \$1,500 whichever is less.
- o Commercial Thermal Incentive is 25% of the project costs or \$1,000 whichever is less.

NOTE: The 123rd Legislature has given the Public Utilities Commission authority to modify incentive levels to adjust to market conditions.

**Am I guaranteed an incentive or is the program competitive?**

Incentives are open to any Maine resident; however, you must have a reservation number from Energy Federation Incorporated (EFI) before you begin your solar project. Incentives are pre-approved and are awarded only if funding is available. In short, there are no guarantees because the industry is growing fast and demand is outstripping the funding.

**How much money does your program have to give out each year?**

Efficiency Maine has \$500,000 of which 20% minimum must be applied to Solar Thermal, 20% minimum applied toward Solar PV, and 20% minimum applied toward wind.

**What does it mean to be “grid connected”?**

If you receive electricity from an electric utility, you are connected to the power grid; “grid connected”. To qualify for an incentive you must be grid connected.

**If I receive an incentive for solar PV, can I still apply for a solar thermal incentive?**

The legislation does not prohibit anyone from applying for all three solar (solar PV, solar thermal hot water, and solar thermal hot air) and/or wind, and receiving incentives for each.

**Would I still qualify for an incentive if I want to connect a solar thermal system with a geothermal system (or another system combination)?**

As solar systems mature, newer and different methodologies are being developed. For example geothermal heating systems are being assisted by solar PV panels; solar thermal systems are now being incorporated into air-to-water, water-to-water, and/or heat

pumps for heat distribution in radiant floor heat. These solar applications are all authentic solar applications and would qualify for an incentive.

**Are there federal solar rebates?**

Yes, federal tax incentives can be found at [www.energytaxincentives.org](http://www.energytaxincentives.org).

**Am I able to receive both a federal rebate and your incentive?**

There is nothing stating that anyone cannot receive both, you are welcome to apply for each.

**Can Efficiency Maine recommend an installer?**

The Maine Public Utilities Commission is tasked with training and certifying all installers in the state; therefore we cannot make specific installer recommendations. However, we can direct you to our website where a list of certified installers is available. We encourage applicants to call a number of installers, dealers, and manufacturers in your area to determine what system will work best for you and to evaluate the costs.

**Could I install a system myself and still receive Efficiency Maine's incentive, or do I have to be certified? If so, how do I become a certified installer?**

To receive an incentive a system must be installed by a certified installer, even if you put the system in yourself. The Legislation that created the Solar Incentive Program incorporated a number of quality control measures to help ensure Maine Solar Incentive recipients receive quality products that are installed to the highest standards. For that reason, thermal installers must be Master Licensed Plumbers, Oil or LP/NG Technicians, Type II, III or Universal Refrigeration Technicians, or Master Boiler Technicians who have been trained and certified by the Maine Public Utilities Commission, or who are working with an individual who has been trained and certified. Photovoltaic installers must be Master Licensed Electricians and certified by the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP), or working with someone who has been NABCEP certified.

To become a certified solar thermal installer, a licensed professional must take the 2-day workshop offered by the Maine Public Utilities Commission and pass the take-home exam. To see if a workshop is coming up, please visit Efficiency Maine's [calendar of events](#). Classes are provided through the Kennebec Valley Community College on an as needed basis. One can enroll by calling them at 207-453-5134. Currently, PV training is provided through the Kennebec Valley Community College and through IBEW at their Fairfield, Maine office. NABCEP provides the test for certification.

**What if I have a different question?**

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