

# 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? *Most systems that connect to the electrical grid will not provide power during 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 **My Account** tool can help you evaluate your energy use. If possible, look at energy use (kWh) over two or three 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 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.
- Your project**—Do you plan to install it yourself or hire a contractor? Installation requires expertise and all systems must pass an electrical inspection. Businesses are required by electrical code to use licensed professional electricians. 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 need to be replaced soon?
- Will my roof warranty be affected?
- Will my homeowner's insurance premium change?
- How long do you plan to live in your current home? *If you move, accrued energy credits are forfeited.*
- Are you running or planning to run a business, including cryptomining, at your home? *This could change your rate, system requirements pricing, which will affect how quickly you recoup your investment.*
- You'll still have an Idaho Power bill each month. Under the current billing structure, you will be responsible for service fees and any energy you need from Idaho Power.

**Note:** Idaho Power's on-site generation and net metering services are not a contract. The services and rules, including the current compensation and billing structure and interconnection requirements, are subject to change and current rates do not represent a guarantee of future pricing.

## Questions to ask your installer

- What licenses do you hold and are you licensed in the states of Idaho and Oregon?
- 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 from different sized systems.*

- How does that compare to my monthly and annual energy use?
- If your goal is to have power during an outage, can they install a system to achieve that?
- 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 base rate for residential customers on Schedule 01 is 8.71 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)?  
*For example, in 2018, Idaho Power customers experienced a decrease in electricity costs. Looking forward, Idaho Power's most recent Integrated Resource Plan estimates that relative fuel prices will increase, on average, 1.2 percent per year over the next 18 years.*
  - Does the payback consider the rate that production will decrease each year over the life of the panels as they age?
  - Is there an equipment maintenance and replacement schedule?
- Do I need to clean the panels or remove snow?
- 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

Under our on-site generation and net metering tariffs, customers can install their own small-scale renewable generation source to offset some of their energy needs. They remain connected to Idaho Power's grid for reliable, consistent electricity, drawing energy anytime they need more than their system can provide. See the [Customer Generation FAQs](#) for more information.

Prior to installing the system, your installer should complete Idaho Power's Customer Generation Application for approval to connect to Idaho Power's grid. Any upgrades needed to connect your system to the grid will be at your expense.

## Alternatives

- Consider [energy efficiency](#) updates for your home prior to installing your system. Lowering your energy use conserves resources and 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 your [Green Choices](#) on our website.

## 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. Find [Tips for Choosing a Solar Installer](#) on our website

## Helpful Links

[idahopower.com/customergeneration](http://idahopower.com/customergeneration) for tariff information

[my.idahopower.com](http://my.idahopower.com) for your energy usage history

[google.com/get/sunroof](http://google.com/get/sunroof) for an estimate on solar size, cost and payback

[pvwatts.nrel.gov](http://pvwatts.nrel.gov) to estimate system size and energy output

[oregon.gov/energy](http://oregon.gov/energy) to find tax credits for Oregon residents

[dsireusa.org](http://dsireusa.org) a database of state incentives for renewables

[oemr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015.12.31\\_ID\\_Solar\\_Dev\\_Res.pdf](http://oemr.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015.12.31_ID_Solar_Dev_Res.pdf) for a list of solar installers