



## 10 STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE BUYING SOLAR

**STEP 1: MAKE YOUR HOME ENERGY EFFICIENT BEFORE BUYING A SOLAR SYSTEM.** Adding insulation, sealing air leaks and completing other basic do-it-yourself projects make sense for several reasons. You can cut your energy costs immediately and you will also be able to reduce the size of photovoltaic (PV) system you purchase. You may request an energy audit and receive information to assist you in cutting your energy costs.

**STEP 2: TAKE TIME TO RESEARCH BEFORE INVESTING IN A SOLAR SYSTEM.** WECC should be one of your first contacts when you begin to explore options. We can answer basic questions, provide resources, and direct you to reputable contractors in our area. Over the last 20 years (2000-2019), Woodruff Electric's residential rates averaged a 1.3 percent annual rate increase. During the last 10 years (2010-2019), the average was 1.1 percent. \*Arkansas has the seventh lowest residential price of electricity. \*Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Form EIA-861M, Monthly Electric Power Industry Report for January 2020.

**STEP 3: UNDERSTAND HOW A SOLAR SYSTEM WORKS WITH OUR SYSTEM.** Most solar systems are designed to provide you with a portion of the electricity needed but won't provide 100 percent of your needs. At night and on cloudy days, and possibly at other high-energy-use times, you'll need more power than your PV system can produce. That means you'll still be connected to your cooperative's power lines. Because these systems are grid-connected, energy can flow both ways. Woodruff Electric has set agreements, policies and rates for connecting PV systems to our lines (the grid) and for possibly purchasing any excess energy your system might provide. As you begin to explore solar systems, be sure you ask about our rate structures, interconnection, essential safety precautions, and other connection-related details. It is important to remember that any aggregated meters must stay connected at all times while net metering is active.

**STEP 4: REVIEW YOUR CURRENT ENERGY USE, SO YOU CAN DETERMINE WHAT SIZE PV SYSTEM TO INSTALL.** Woodruff Electric can help you review your past energy use, and help you determine how the projects you've undertaken to improve energy efficiency may help lower your future energy use. One pertinent bit of information that will be useful is looking at how your energy use fluctuates throughout the day. Having that information will help you determine—with expert assistance—the size and type of system best suited to your situation.

**STEP 5: TALLY UPFRONT COSTS.** WECC does not sell, install, or maintain PV systems, so you will either purchase or lease a system from a contractor who is not a part of the cooperative. If you purchase a solar system, you will be the owner, and you'll be responsible for the purchase price, as well as ongoing maintenance and repair costs. If leasing is the option you prefer, you will pay less initially, but you'll likely have higher ongoing costs. In either case, it pays to spend time figuring out all of the expenses you'll be responsible for during the life of the system. These may include installation (in addition to the price of the system), interconnection costs, insurance, taxes, and possibly others, too. If you are leasing, ask contractors about the length of the term, if the contract is transferrable to a new homeowner should you sell your home, potential for price increases, as well as the same questions you'd ask if you were to purchase a PV system. In the "credit" column of your price comparisons, look at any incentives, rebates and tax credits offered for either a purchase or a lease. With solar, the minimum monthly electric bill will vary based on your rate classification. *For example, if you are a residential member then you can expect your minimum monthly electric bill to be \*\$26 plus applicable taxes. \*NOTE: Subject to change.*

**STEP 6: SEARCH FOR INCENTIVES, REBATES AND TAX CREDITS.** Opportunities vary by state/location and many have expiration dates. Database websites are available that include interactive maps, showing federal and state incentives, credits, exemptions, grants, loans and rebates for residential and commercial/industrial projects.

**STEP 7: ACCEPT SHORT AND LONG TERM RESPONSIBILITIES.** If you purchase a PV system, you'll need to meet the requirements of Woodruff Electric's interconnection agreement. That includes paying any costs of connecting to the cooperative grid. Local and/or state officials are responsible for conducting safety inspections, but it's your responsibility to notify them in advance about your installation. After the interconnection requirements are met and the safety and integrity of your system are approved, WECC will take care of the connection to the grid. And, as the owner of the system, you'll be responsible for maintenance and system repairs. (CONTINUES ON REVERSE SIDE)



## 10 STEPS TO TAKE... (CONTINUED)

If you lease a system, your responsibilities will depend on the agreement you sign. Know and understand what your responsibilities are for the system prior to signing any agreements.

**STEP 8: FOLLOW ALL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS.** Most solar systems are grid-connected. Because of the two-way flow of electricity, excess energy your PV system collects during the daytime flows into your cooperative's lines. This shoulders you with the responsibility for the safety of your cooperative line staff, others who may come in contact with a downed power line and your cooperative's equipment. Improper connection and maintenance of your system may endanger people and the reliability of the grid.

**STEP 9: CHOOSE A REPUTABLE CONTRACTOR OR INSTALLER.** Start with a list of options garnered from research, your electric cooperative, local or state Better Business Bureaus, renewable energy associations, the state energy office, Arkansas Attorney General's office, extension service staff, and any other local experts you can call on for assistance and advice. Contact at least a few of those contractors appearing on your list, especially if recommended by multiple state and local experts. Narrow your list after asking many questions, checking out other installations the contractor has completed, comparing bids (get at least three), checking references and thoroughly examining contracts. If possible, ask a contract specialist or lawyer to review the contract before signing.

**STEP 10: MAINTAIN GOOD RECORDS.** Keep files on your pre-purchase research and pre-installation data provided by your cooperative, as well as bids, contracts, inspection reports, maintenance records, and all other details. In addition, you'll want to know about system performance, so set up a system to track and compare your actual system performance with predictions provided by the manufacturer, contractor or installer.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Installing a smart power strip is a quick and easy way to start saving money while making your home more energy efficient. Smart power strips can actually cut power off to save energy since they are able to detect when a device is in standby mode.

*Source: energy.gov*



## UTILITY CONSTRUCTION AHEAD

### PLEASE MOVE OVER FOR EMERGENCY AND UTILITY CREWS

If you see police, firefighters, utility crews or other emergency personnel on the side of the road, please slow down and move over when possible.

***Together, we can keep our crews safe.***

### Woodruff Electric Cooperative Corporation

P.O. Box 1619  
3201 Hwy 1 North  
Forrest City, Arkansas 72336  
Tel. (870) 633-2262  
Fax: (870) 633-0629

#### Office Hours:

8:00am to 5:00pm  
Monday through Friday

#### Contact Numbers:

Augusta: (870) 347-2431  
Forrest City: (870) 633-2262  
Moro: (870) 768-4821  
Barton: (870) 572-2800  
[www.woodruffelectric.coop](http://www.woodruffelectric.coop)

### CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Save yourself from possible personal injury, job delay and expense by calling before you dig. Don't take chances. Call "Arkansas One-Call" at 811 or 1-800-482-8998, at least 48 hours prior to excavating and tell them where you plan to dig.



#### OUTAGE REPORTING

Call our automated outage reporting number at:

Call 870-633-7100 or  
1-888-559-6400