HOMEOWNER RESOURCES

Solar Power in Winter: Save Money and Energy

Most home improvement projects, including solar panel installation, are started and completed during the spring or fall seasons—when the weather is more comfortable and predictable. As homeowners watch their utility bills steadily rise when the winter months give way to spring, solar paneling for homes becomes especially enticing. In California, for example, electricity usage is about 50 percent higher in the summer than in the winter, according to the LA Times.

However, a home improvement project during the high season will likely impact your estimate and project timeline. During these warmer months, contractors and supplies are in high demand— you're not the only one noticing a high electric bill. Contractors are less likely to offer discounts during peak times. To save money on solar panels for your home, consider scheduling your project during the cooler months.

It is important to note that installing solar panels does not happen overnight. From finding a contractor and evaluating quotes to ordering and waiting for supplies, the project could last weeks or even months. For the many homeowners looking to power their homes with solar energy to save on utility bills, the first step in facing tomorrow's expensive summer months is beginning the home improvement journey today.

FIND LOCAL CONTRACTORS

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Do Solar Panels Increase Home Value?

Many homeowners are concerned about the efficacy of solar panel systems during the winter. While it is true that less sun time means less solar energy, your home doesn't need as much energy during the winter, either.

In a Department of Energy blog, Solar Energy Technologies Office Director Charlie Gay writes solar panel systems "actually produce useful power throughout all four seasons." He mentions that DOE's Regional Test Centers —in Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Florida, and Vermont—assess specific weather-related challenges for solar paneling.

"Researchers at the test centers have shown that solar can still successfully generate electricity in snowy areas and other harsh environments," Gay writes. Additionally, according to the New York Times, "snow typically melts right off the panels, especially if the panels are tilted." That's not to say that heavy snow is negligible, but it's certainly manageable.

In fact, California's solar panels were so successful in March 2017 that the state gifted Arizona with free solar energy for 14 days of the month, according to the LA Times.

"It happened on eight days in January and nine in February as well," reporter Ivan Penn writes. "All told, those transactions helped save Arizona electricity customers millions of dollars..."

A trustworthy solar energy installer should be able to explain to you how the climate in your region, and various weather conditions, will affect your solar panels in the winter. Contractors are also skilled at making sure your home remains comfortable throughout the installation.

Save Money with Seasonal Sales and Promotions

Construction slows in the winter, but contractors still have a business to operate. To entice homeowners, many contractors will offer discounts and specials to attract business during the colder months. In our recent interviews, 47 percent of homeowners told Modernize they had taken advantage of timely promotions or savings offers to offset the costs of solar panel installations. Take advantage of these seasonal offers to save money on your own project.

When it comes to solar panels for houses, winter shoppers have the extra benefit of local, state, and federal incentives to add onto seasonal promotions. These incentives could either save you money in the short term initial phases of installation or in the long term through tax rebates and similar programs.

The Department of Energy's Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency (or DSIRE) lists hundreds of policies and incentives across the country, numbering anywhere from West Virginia's 14 to Oregon's 147. DSIRE displays rebate, loan, and grant programs, personal tax credits, sales tax incentives, and performance-based incentives, to mention some examples. However, no database is full proof.

Confirm your possible short- and long-term savings. A reliable contractor will be able to check DSIRE and other resources to maximize your initial and

future savings throughout your journey to home improvement.

Save with Increased Solar Contractor Competition

Today's solar energy market has contractors stepping up their game to compete in an increasingly saturated arena. In many ways, that puts homeowners in a coveted position— high-quality solar energy contractors want your business.

For example, consider the 10 states CNBC deemed to be "leading the way in solar." Each of them has seen a 47-percent drop in solar panel installation prices over the last five years, according to the Solar Energy Industries Association. We list those states for you below, along with pertinent information to help you save on your solar installation this winter.

Our sources include data from SEIA, DSIRE, and our own research. Average prices are based on a 6-kilowatt system—learn more about your energy needs here:

California

Average price: $13,566

- Join **5,976,728** solar-powered homes.
- Compare quotes from one of **934** solar energy contractors.
- Save with more than **250** possible incentives.

North Carolina

Average price: $15,600

- Join **513,145** solar-powered homes.
- Compare quotes from one of **211** solar energy contractors.
- Save with more than **130** possible incentives.

Arizona

Average price: $11,214

- Join **536,286** solar-powered homes.
- Compare quotes from one of **158** solar energy contractors.
- Save with more than **100** possible ncentives.

Nevada

Average price: $16,750

- Join **433,263** solar-powered homes.
- Compare quotes from one of **35** solar energy contractors.
- Save with more than **75** possible ncentives.

Texas

Average price: $12,390

- Join **330,077** solar-powered homes.
- Compare quotes from one of **215** solar energy contractors.
- Save with more than **180** possible incentives.

New Jersey

Average price: $13,188

- Join **394,335** solar-powered homes.
- Compare quotes from one of **259** solar energy contractors.
- Save with more than **90** possible incentives.

Massachusettes

Average price: $13,188

- Join **368,844** solar-powered homes.
- Compare quotes from one of **114** solar energy contractors.
- Save with more than **130** possible incentives.

Florida

Average price: $10,584

- Join **277,340** solar-powered homes.
- Compare quotes from one of **245** solar energy contractors.
- Save with more than **130** possible incentives.

Utah

Average price: $16,300

- Join **313,945** solar-powered homes.
- Compare quotes from one of **51** solar energy contractors.
- Save with more than **75** possible incentives.

Georgia

Average price: $17,100

- Join **174,013** solar-powered homes.
- Compare quotes from one of **87** solar energy contractors.
- Save with more than **90** possible incentives.

During high season, it can take a few weeks to meet with busy contractors. The other side of the increasing demand for contractors in summer is the decreasing demand for them during winter. With less work during the winter months, contractors are more flexible.

Additionally, high season means ordering necessary supplies from manufacturers is often met with lengthy delivery periods. Whether mounting trackers, inverters, or other equipment, materials are also usually less expensive and could take less time to ship during winter.

The Best Season to Install Solar Panels

Whether you install today or in the summer, your long-term savings will remain similar, but incentives and seasonal promotions are never a guarantee, and never guaranteed to last.

For example, the Solar Investment Tax Credit (ITC), which applies to up to 30 percent of your installation (that's hard and soft costs combined), is phasing

out its value over the next several years. By 2022, that 30-percent figure drops to 10 percent, according to SEIA.

Additionally, homeowners could be subject to state requirements making solar energy a mandatory source of power for new houses—for now, though, only Californians have to worry about that. On Dec. 2018, California lawmakers voted "to require homes built in 2020 and later be solar-powered," according to the LA Times.

"Energy officials estimate the provisions will add $10,000 to the cost of building a single-family home — about $8,400 from adding solar and about $1,500 for making homes more energy-efficient," the article reads. "But those costs would be offset by lower utility bills over the 30-year lifespan of the solar panels, officials said."

With an uncertain future of incentives and a present reality of high competition and ample rebates, the best season to install solar panels is now —no matter when you read this.

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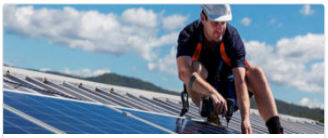

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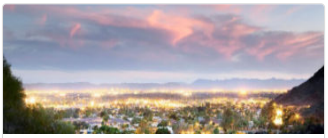

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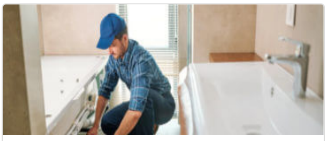

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