

THE LAMPLIGHTER

Official Member Newsletter of Washington EMC

August 2025

Serving members in Baldwin, Emanuel, Glascock, Hancock, Jefferson, Johnson, Laurens, Warren, Washington and Wilkinson counties

How net metering works

Residential solar systems are becoming more attainable, and more homeowners are exploring rooftop solar panels as an additional source for powering their homes. The amount of electricity produced by rooftop solar panels depends on several factors, including your home's sunlight exposure, energy use habits and the number of panels installed. In many cases, rooftop solar panels can generate an adequate amount of electricity to power your home.

What is net metering?

Washington EMC offers a net metering program, which compensates solar owners for any excess electricity the system produces. If a solar system generates more power than the home

requires (typically during peak sunlight hours), the additional electricity can be fed back into the electric grid. In return, the homeowner will receive a credit on their energy bill for the excess energy. This billing arrangement is known as net metering. While rooftop solar is the most popular renewable generation source for homeowners, it should be noted that net metering can also be applied to small-scale wind, hydroelectric, geothermal and biomass systems that generate electricity.

How does Washington EMC know how much to credit for the excess power?

When rooftop solar panels produce less electricity than the home requires, the electric meter runs forward, just as




Wendy Sellers
President/CEO

it would on a home without solar panels. But when the solar system generates more electricity than you need, the electric meter runs backward, and the excess power is sent back to the grid.

At the end of the billing cycle, you are charged for the "net" energy used from the electric grid. It's important to understand that the amount of electricity you use does not include the full cost of maintaining grid infrastructure that supports your home year-round. This is why you will typically see charges (in addition to "net" use) that help maintain reliable electric service, such as grid upkeep, transformer upgrades and system balancing.

Net metering is especially helpful throughout the year, as solar production is typically higher during summer months and lower during winter months. It allows solar system owners to earn credits during high-production

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UNDERSTANDING NET METERING

Net metering is a billing mechanism that compensates consumers who own residential solar panels for any excess power sent back to the electric grid. Here's how it works.

1. A privately-owned, residential solar panel system converts energy from sunlight into electricity.
2. An inverter, which is connected to the electric grid, converts the electricity from direct current (DC) to alternating current (AC) to make it safe for use in homes.
3. The electricity is used to power the home. (It should be noted that solar panels do not provide electricity during a power outage.)
4. If the panels produce more electricity than the home needs, the consumer is compensated for excess electricity sent back to the grid.

Note: Factors such as solar system ownership and state-specific laws can impact net metering policies in various regions. Contact your electric cooperative if you have questions about net metering.



WashingtonEMC
A Member-owned Electric Cooperative

— An electric membership corporation

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Back-to-School Money Lessons



As kids prepare to return to the classrooms, we believe one subject deserves attention alongside traditional classes: financial literacy. Teaching young people how to manage money isn't just an extra-curricular skill, it's a fundamental life skill that will help shape their future success.

Financial literacy can provide students with the necessary tools for budgeting, saving and making informed financial decisions. Adults can help instill this knowledge by having age-appropriate conversations, from teaching needs versus wants to college savings planning. To help start these conversations, Homestead Advisers has resources, including age-appropri-

ate discussion guides and activities.

Equipping kids and young adults with financial knowledge is an investment in their future well-being. When children learn about investing early, they may develop valuable skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. By helping children understand financial concepts, we can equip them with the tools to make responsible money decisions as adults.

This financial wellness tip is provided by Homestead Advisers, a financial services company established 30-plus years ago to help meet the investment needs of communities within the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) family.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Replace your cooling system's filter regularly to maintain strong airflow and boost energy efficiency. A clean filter means your system doesn't have to work as hard, saving energy and lowering your utility bills. Factors like allergies and pets in the home can impact how often filters should be replaced. Check the filter every month and replace it as needed. Changing filters regularly also reduces wear and tear on your cooling system, helping extend the life of the unit.

Source: energy.gov





Prioritize the invisible upgrades that make your home more comfortable and efficient, such as adding blown-in insulation to your attic.

Efficiency tips for older homes

By Miranda Boutelle

If you're interested in improving the efficiency of an older home, start by prioritizing the invisible upgrades that make a home more comfortable and efficient.

Many older homes are not properly insulated. Insulation has several benefits beyond sealing your home and keeping outdoor air from seeping in. It reduces outdoor noise, makes your home quieter and improves your overall comfort.

Always properly air seal before you insulate. Older homes with pocket doors, coved ceilings, dumbwaiters, doors to attic spaces and laundry chutes allow indoor air to escape through the cavities, gaps and cracks around these classic features. Sealing off open cavities around those features often requires fastening plywood, rigid foam or drywall into place, and then caulking around the edges.

Keep an eye out for framing features that cause drafts. Balloon framing is a type of construction where wall studs run all the way from the foundation to the roof, allowing air to flow freely through those spaces. Second floors with knee wall attics on both sides are notorious for air leakage. Open cavities allow air to flow horizontally between the attic spaces, making the home uncomfortable and inefficient. Seal off the open cavities in the floor framing and insulate attic spaces.

Dense-packed cellulose or closed-cell foam insulation can be sprayed into exterior walls. Skilled contractors can remove pieces of siding and drill holes to fill the wall cavities from the outside of the home. For brick or stone homes, holes can be drilled from the inside and then patched and painted. Insulating walls from the inside of the home requires more time and effort in preparation and cleanup, but having well-insulated walls is worth it.

Knob and tube wiring—commonly used from the early 1880s to the 1930s with no grounding wire—should be replaced prior to insulating walls and attics for safety purposes. Contact

Considering the cost of replacing windows, it may be better to invest in air sealing and insulation first. Then, consider storm windows to keep the charm of the original windows, such as leaded glass and stained-glass windows in good condition.

between insulation and knob and tube wiring can create a fire hazard.

People often think new windows are the best way to improve a home's efficiency. Considering the cost of replacing windows, it may be better to invest in air sealing and insulation first. If your home has leaded-glass or stained-glass windows, consider installing storm windows to help keep the windows in good condition.

Once you've addressed the envelope of your home, consider appliance improvements. Replace an old electric water heater with a heat pump water heater. This upgrade can save a family of four an estimated \$550 a year and more than \$5,600 over the lifetime of the water heater, according to Energy Star.

Invest in high-efficiency heating and cooling equipment. A mini-split heat pump, also known as a ductless heat pump, is a more efficient option than electric baseboard heating and provides the benefit of air conditioning.

Older homes don't have to be inefficient. Show your home some love and invest in energy-efficient upgrades.

Miranda Boutelle is COO at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon and writes about energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.

How net metering works,

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months and use them later in the year when solar output is lower.

Who uses the excess power generated by the solar system?

The electricity produced by rooftop solar doesn't go directly to your neighbors. The power flows back to the local grid managed by Washington EMC. We then apply the credits for any excess power you've contributed.

What issues should I consider before committing to a rooftop solar system for my home?

While generating electricity from the sun (and sending excess power back to the grid) is an exciting opportunity, it's important to thoroughly research the details before installing solar panels or any other type of small-scale renewable energy system. Some of those specifics include any financial incentives offered through local, state or federal authorities and what effect it means if/when those incentives end. Also, your current roof's age, condition and structure are good to keep in mind, as many companies advise installing solar over a newer roof, say less than five years old. Even the height of surrounding trees has an effect on how much sun actually reaches your solar array and may require cutting or trimming to allow the greatest amount of sunlight to reach the solar panels.

Washington EMC members who install solar and participate in net metering will need to sign an interconnection agreement, ensure a bidirectional electric meter is installed and check out additional information on our website at www.washingtonemc.com/member-relations/solar-information,

then click the "Customer Owned Facilities" link.

It's important to note that net metering will not eliminate your energy bill. Even if you generate as much electricity as you use, which is rare, you will continue to be billed for essential services like grid access, service fees and

other fixed costs that are necessary to maintain a safe and reliable system.

If you're interested in solar or would like to learn more about net metering, Washington EMC can help. By connecting with us, you can gain a better understanding of the solar energy system, billing options and more.

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