

SOLAR FAQ'S

Who is Eligible?

All members are allowed to connect up to 25 kW of generation. Under special circumstances, larger services may connect more under a new contract.

Does Fall River Electric sell and install generation?

No, Fall River Electric does not sell or install small generation systems. We can, however, help you with the process and offer information that may help you in choosing the right installer for you.

Does Fall River Electric contract with solar companies to sell small generation systems?

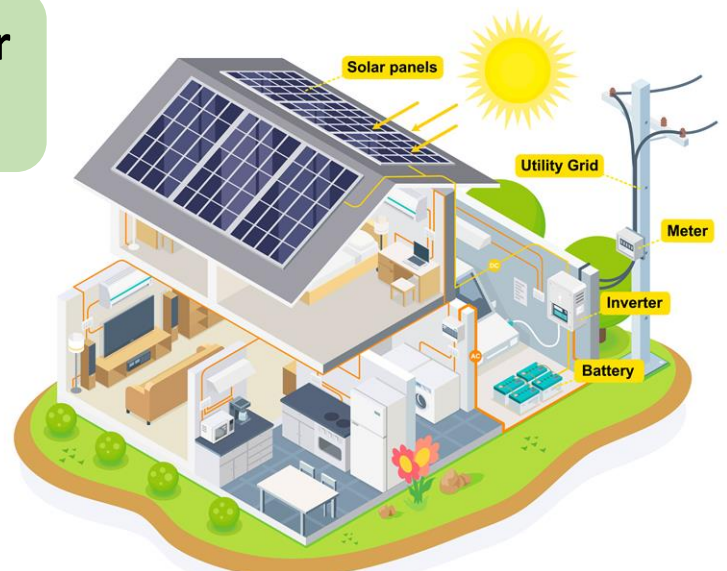
Fall River Electric does not hire or contract with installers. Fall River works with members to connect to the grid but is not involved with the sale or installation of the system.

When do solar panels produce energy?

Solar panels can only produce energy with They do not produce energy at night and will be limited to production on cloudy days and when snow is covering panels. Solar systems do not have capability of storing energy without the use of batteries, which come at a high cost to add to your installation.

Will generation at my service lower my electric bill?

While installing generation may lower your power bill, there are other factors you need to consider. Renewable generation systems are large investments, and it may take years to see a return on that investment. Payment methods can greatly affect your return. Are you paying cash up front? Are you financing? How much will interest be? Another factor that can change your length of return are changes in the net metering tariff.



What is the typical payback for rooftop solar?

Fall River has some of the lowest electricity prices in the nation. This is largely due to our location and our water resources to produce low-cost hydroelectric energy. While having lower cost energy is great, it will also prolong members recovering costs on their solar investments. Payback periods can vary greatly depending on installation costs, financing, location, incentives, and changes in net metering tariffs. Given current rates and incentives, one can expect 25-30 years for payback.



What factors affect payback for on-site generation system?

Factors that can affect payback are installation costs (cost per watt), system design, location, available incentives, net metering tariff changes, and cost of electricity. You can break your installation costs down to what it costs per watt. This is a good way to compare different installers. The system's energy production will depend on the technology used, how the system is wired, and environmental factors. Solar generation can change based on direction and tilt of panels and if there is any shade. Wind generation is affected by location, turbine height, and physical obstacles that interrupt wind flow. In the past, there have been federal tax incentives for renewable energy installations, which can benefit the payback period. Additionally, the net metering tariffs are not contracts and are subject to change. Modifications to the tariff can change the value of excess energy generation.

If I install solar or wind, do I still need power from the utility?

The reason to continue your service with Fall Electric after installing on-site generation is reliability. The sun does not always shine, and the wind does not always blow. Even at the on-site, generation may not produce enough to operate your service. Also, larger motors in your house draw a large in-rush when turned on and your average residential generation system does not have the juice to support this.

How does billing work for net metered members?

With the current net metering rate, members get a one-for-one credit up to what they used on a monthly basis. Excess energy gets paid out at average wholesale power costs as a credit on the account for future needs.



What type of renewable generation systems are allowed to connect with Fall Rivers system?

Solar photovoltaic (PV) is the most common installed generation type. The net metering program allows for a variety of different types of generation. We have PV, wind, and small hydro systems currently connected with Fall River.

What size system should I get?

The size of system you should get depends on the available space, how much energy you use at your service, and what type of energy type you select. We suggest using your past usage history to help estimate size and cost. You can access your history by logging into or creating a member portal account. There are also online tools available to estimate solar generation in your area (PVWATTS calculator).

How much energy does a system generate?

The energy produced by a system will depend on the type of generation and other factors such as technology, age, location, orientation, and environmental conditions. For instance, solar panels do not produce consistent energy throughout the year due to the amount of daylight and weather conditions. Cloud and snow cover and shade from nearby trees or structures can cause variances in your day-to-day production. PVWATTS is an online tool created for estimating solar generation based on location, weather patterns, and system design (tilt, angle, directional orientation, etc.). With the tool, you can enter your location, physical location parameters, and size in kW, and the tool will estimate your generation by monthly and yearly totals. You can log into your member portal and compare the generation output by using this tool and your annual usage.

Does Fall River Electric offer any incentives or rebates for installing small renewable energy systems?

No. There are federal and state tax incentives and loan programs that can help with financing renewable generation.



CONNECTING YOUR SYSTEM

How do I get started?

Start by looking over our solar checklist or speak with an installer. Complete and submit the member generation form. Wait for approval by Fall River Electric to proceed; we will review the application. It is recommended to not proceed without approval because this can come at an expense if upgrades are needed. Once approved by Fall River Electric and required permits are submitted, construction can start. After the final state inspection is completed and passed, then you must fill out the system verification form. Fall River Electric will then conduct an on-site inspection to verify requirements have been met. Once this is complete, we will change your billing over to net metering.

How does net metering work?

Generation systems that are connected to the grid will transfer energy between your house and the electrical grid. At times, your generation will be producing more energy than your system needs so the excess power will flow in the grid. At other times, your system will be using more than you are generating, so all the energy produced will stay internal to your service. Note that if you have a generation metering device, this will differ from what Fall River Electric is metering.

Is there any special equipment required?

Customer generation is an electric source and must be designed with that in mind. Fall River requires a grid-tied inverter that meets the UL1741 or IEEE1547 standards. We also require an AC disconnect switch that has to be within 10' of the members side of the meter.

What does it cost to connect a generation system to the grid?

If you already have an active account, there are no application fees or additional charges for billing to convert over to net metering. If there are any necessary upgrades to your service and Fall River equipment, the member is responsible.

What if I start out small and add to my stem size over time?

You may upgrade your system a little at a time as long as it does not surpass the Fall River generation limit of 25 kilowatts (kW). Each time it is upgraded, all permitting must be completed.

What happens if your system does not comply with Fall River Electric's requirements?

Grid-tied systems must comply with the requirements. These requirements ensure the safety of Fall River and emergency personnel. Members with grid-tied generation systems that do not comply will be asked to bring the system into compliance or risk being disconnected from the utility system.



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