

Solar Checklist

Fall River Rural Electric Cooperative provides the following to help you in gather the information you will need to make an informed decision when investing in solar for your business or home. Reference the following list when making your decision:

- How much of your energy use do you want to offset?
(For a residential service, installation cannot exceed a 25kW and we suggest reviewing your energy use by month to size your installation for your specific energy use. For commercial, please contact Nick Watson at Fall River Electric to help size your solar investment.)
- Do you plan to install it yourself or hire a contractor?
(Fall River advises the use of a solar contractor because it is a specific application that takes knowledge and experience with electrical codes to pass inspection. Fall River Electric also recommends getting several bids.)
- Do you want a battery or generator backup power source in the case of a power outage?
- Your monthly and annual energy usage (kilowatt hours [kWh]) 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. Visit Fall River Electric's member service portal by clicking My Usage, Billing History (see helpful links below).
- How much are you willing to spend on a system?
(This will determine the size and type of system you can afford.)
- Each kilowatt (kW) of solar requires approximately 100 square feet of unshaded space. Decide on a roof- or ground-mounted system and consider how much unshaded, southern-oriented space is available.
- How many kWh do you want to produce?
- Do you plan to buy or finance your system?
(If you plan to finance, remember to factor in the interest rate on a loan.)

Other things to consider:

- Are there any restrictions from your homeowner's association, city, or county?
- Will your roof warranty be affected by installing solar panels on the roof?
- Will the roof need to be replaced soon?
- Will your homeowner's insurance premium change?
- How long do you plan to live in your current home?
- You'll still have a Fall River Electric bill each month. Under the current billing structure, you will be responsible for your access fee and any energy you need from Fall River Electric.

Note: Fall River Electric'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:

- Who is responsible for post-installation roof inspection and roof repair? (homeowner or installer?)
- Who is responsible for damages, such as structural, ceiling, insulation, etc. caused from solar installation? (homeowner or installer?)
- If there are injuries to the installation crew or the public during installation, who is responsible? (homeowner or installer?)
- Who is responsible for satisfying applicable electrical codes for any existing or new wiring? (homeowner or installer?)
- What licenses do you hold? Are you licensed in the states of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming? (Contractors are required to have their Electrical Contracting License or have a Limited Electrical Contractors License)
- What size system (kW) would meet my generation goal? (A maximum of 25kW is allowed on a Fall River grid-tied system.)
- How much energy, in kWh, will the system produce each month? Each year? The National Renewable Energy Laboratory's PV Watts program (see helpful links below) can help you estimate energy output from different sized systems.
- How does my energy production compare to my monthly and annual energy usage?
- If your goal is to have power during an outage, what can a contractor implement to achieve that? This can be done with either a battery back-up system or propane powered generator.
- 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:
 - Fall River Electric's current cost of energy for residential customers?
 - Does the payback consider the rate that production will decrease each year over the life of the panels as they age?
 - When solar inverters are not generating power, they are consuming 10 - 50 watts. Is this calculated into my payback date?
 - Does the payback take into consideration the current versions of Fall River Electric's Net Metering Rates?
 - 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 Fall River Electric'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 Fall River Electric's grid for reliable, consistent electricity, drawing energy anytime they need more than their system can provide. See the Net Metering FAQs for more information.

Prior to installing the system, your installer should complete Fall River Electric's Net Metering Application and Verification forms for approval to connect to Fall River Electric's grid. Any upgrades needed to connect your system to the grid will be at your expense.

Alternatives:

- Consider energy efficiency updates to 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 Power Rates on our website.

Helpful Links:

<https://www.fallriverelectric.com/sites/fallriver/files/2020%20Net%20Metering%20Rate%20Tariff.pdf>
for Tariff information

<https://billing.fallriverelectric.com/oscp/OnlineServices/FeaturesLogin/tabid/134/Default.aspx> member service portal to access you monthly usage

<https://pvwatts.nrel.gov/> to estimate system size and energy output

<https://www.dsireusa.org/> database for state incentives for renewables

<https://www.nrel.gov/> National Renewable Energy Laboratory