

## Frequently Asked Questions About Solar

### *What is Solar Energy?*

Solar energy is the process of harnessing the energy of the sun to perform work. The sunlight can be converted into electricity, used for indoor lighting and used for heating water, buildings or swimming pools. The most common use today is the converting of sunlight into electricity. Photovoltaic systems are used to capture the energy from sunlight and convert it to electricity.

### *Does Southern Pine Electric allow solar panels to be connected to their lines?*

Yes, Southern Pine Electric allows solar panels to be connected to our distribution system through properly installed inverters/controllers and disconnect switches. These devices must function in such a manner so to disconnect the solar installation from the distribution system to prevent energizing the line and injuring our linemen and the public.

### *Does Southern Pine Electric pay us for any solar power that we generate?*

Southern Pine Electric is under an “all-requirements” contract with Cooperative Energy (formerly South Mississippi Electric Power Association). Cooperative Energy will pay the consumer for the power that is put back onto the electric system. The price Cooperative Energy currently pays is 4.5 cents/kWh.

### *Does the electric meter turn backwards when we put power back onto the electric system?*

No. In order to measure the power put back onto the grid, Southern Pine reprograms or changes out the meter to a type that measures and records the flow of power in both directions separately.

### *Do all solar systems have to be connected to the electric system?*

No. There are solar systems known as off-grid systems that do not connect to the electric grid. They are typically connected to a battery system, charged by the solar panels, so that electricity will be available when the sun is not shining. One of the most common off-grid systems in this area is a solar powered electric fence charger.

### *What is a “solar farm”?*

A “solar farm” is the name of a large installation of ground-based solar panels that typically supply large amounts of power directly to electric utilities. They can be owned by the utility or an independent power producer that sells large quantities of power to the utility.

### *Is there any way that I can take advantage of solar power without investing a lot of money in a system by myself?*

Yes, although not installed in this area yet, there are “community” solar installations. This allows a homeowner to purchase a block of electric power being generated at a solar farm to offset their usage, receive investment return on the unused portion of the purchased block of power, and, in some cases, receive a tax credit for the investment – all without having to perform maintenance on the installation.

*What is the typical size of a residential solar installation?*

While solar installations come in all sizes, the typical residential rooftop installation is less than 10 kW. There are small commercial rooftop installations that reach upward to around 100 kW.

*What is Southern Pine’s opinion regarding solar?*

Southern Pine Electric is supportive of any activity or product that will help our members save on their electric bill and be environmental friendly. We support solar installations. We also support many energy efficiency measures and products.

*Are Southern Pine Electric and Cooperative Energy active with solar?*

Cooperative Energy has installed five 100-kW solar farms across its service area, one of which is at Southern Pine’s new campus, as part of a pilot program to determine the most efficient location to install additional solar farms.

Cooperative Energy has also invested in a 53-MW solar farm near Sumrall in Lamar County, Miss., that should be producing electricity by the end of the year 2017.

Cooperative Energy, along with Southern Pine Electric and the other cooperatives in the area, are working together to develop guidelines that have been presented to the Mississippi Public Service Commission to make solar installations more attractive.

Southern Pine and Cooperative Energy are working together to streamline the application and commissioning process of solar installations.

*How much solar power is installed directly on Southern Pine’s system?*

At the end of 2016 there were around a dozen rooftop systems installed on Southern Pine’s system ranging in size from 0.5 kW to 100 kW, with more being added every day.

*What is the process to install solar power?*

Once an individual has decided to install solar, they should select a company and installer. A good, reputable company can help advise the most economical size unit to be installed. The following are considerations for selecting the installer:

- Training
- Certification
- Experience

- Word-of-mouth recommendations

An application for interconnection should be submitted to Southern Pine Electric. The installer will need to assist the owner in filling out the application. The application can be found on the Distributed Generation Process Document [Click here for document](#), or Interconnection Agreement. [Click here for agreement](#)

Once the application, along with all required information, has been submitted, a study process by Southern Pine's engineering begins. This process normally doesn't take but a short amount of time to complete but could take several weeks, based on the unit and its placement on Southern Pine's lines.

Once the study is complete, the individual will be notified if the application is approved. If approved, the individual can proceed with the installation process.

After the installation is complete the owner should contact Southern Pine to schedule a commissioning date. At this time an Interconnect Agreement will be signed and Southern Pine and Cooperative Energy personnel shall witness the commissioning. Also at this time all applicable fees must be paid.

When the commissioning is complete Southern Pine will schedule a meter change out. When the meter is changed out and the Interconnection Agreement is fully executed, Southern Pine will notify the owner that they can turn on the solar unit and begin generating electricity.

*What are the normal fees to connect solar to Southern Pine?*

The current fees set by Southern Pine's Board of Directors are:

- Application Fee, \$35.00
- Metering and Equipment Fee, \$100.00
- Monthly Fee, None

*What is the estimated cost of a solar installation?*

The cost of solar is dependent on the size unit that is installed. A good way to estimate the cost is to:

- Determine the square footage of the available south facing roof area
- Multiply the square footage by 10 to determine the watts available
- Multiply the watts by \$6 to \$10 to get an estimate total of the installed cost.

*What do Southern Pine and Cooperative Energy see as the outlook for solar?*

New technologies for solar are being developed every day and the efficiency of converting sunlight to electricity is increasing. We are seeing inquiries daily for more and larger solar

systems. As our nation and the world demand cleaner, more efficient power and a cleaner environment, more solar installations will be built. And the prices of solar systems are decreasing, making the systems more attractive. We expect more rooftop units to be installed and more solar farms built.

*Where can I obtain additional information on solar?*

You may contact Jeremiah Seal at Southern Pine Electric at 601-785-6511 or 1-800-231-5240. He will be happy to assist you.