How to Go Solar in Minnesota

Thinking about going solar? Solar energy can help you save money, reduce your carbon footprint, and increase your home's value. Here's a step-by-step guide to get you started!

1. Find Out If Your Home Is Suitable for Solar and Assess Your Electrical Needs

- **Start by using the [Minnesota Solar Suitability App](#):** Generate a solar suitability report for your address. This report provides an estimate for the size, cost, and payback period of a solar system at your location.
- **Check your electricity usage:** Look at your electricity bills to find your typical daily Kilowatt hour (kWh) usage. Consider any potential changes in use, such as an electric vehicle or heat pump, to determine the size of the solar system you need.
- **Consider conducting an energy efficiency audit:** Knowledge is power and knowing whether you can reduce your energy usage before going solar will help you size your solar array correctly and get the most "bang for your buck." Contact [CEE](#) or your electric utility for options.

2. Decide How You Want to Pay for Your System

- **First, look into which incentives and tax credits you may qualify for:**
  - Your solar installer can help identify which state and federal incentive programs and tax credits you can take advantage of to lower the overall cost of your system.
    - Consult with your tax advisor to make sure that you're able to take advantage of the tax credit.
  - Your utility may also offer incentive programs. Get started by exploring the [Database of State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency](#).
- **Cash purchase or financing:** You can pay for the cost of the system upfront or choose a financing option to spread out your costs over time. Your installer can help recommend financing institutions or may offer an in-house financing option.

3. Choose a Qualified Solar Installer

- **Explore potential installers:** Check out MnSEIA's [list of qualified installers](#) who work across Minnesota and abide by our Code of Conduct.
- **Get multiple bids:** Obtain 3 bids to compare system types, sizes, energy production, maintenance, warranties, and costs. The companies will assess your property, the condition of your roof, and if solar makes sense for you during an evaluation.

- **Hiring tips:** Explore [MnSEIA's resource page](#) for tips on hiring an installer, including:
  - [Sample questions](#) you should ask your installer to properly vet them and make sure you have all the information you need.
  - Make sure the installer and licensed electrical contractor are in good standing with the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI.) To verify the status of licenses, go to the [DLI License Lookup tool](#).
  - Do not prepay for the entire solar system upfront. Your installer should only request a down payment in the beginning to cover the costs of design, permitting, and interconnection.
- **Ask about energy storage:** Adding a battery is a great way to maximize your solar system by storing your excess energy to use later. Energy storage can be expensive though, but even if you don't plan to include it right away, if your installer knows you might want storage in the future, they can design your solar system to be "storage ready." Always ask what storage training or certifications they have to make sure they are up to date on the rapidly changing options available. Learn more [here](#).

4. Sign a Contract and Have Your System Installed

- **Contract, deposit, and permits:** Sign the contract and pay the initial deposit. Your installer will create detailed plans and obtain the necessary interconnection agreements and permits. Depending on your utility and permitting authority, obtaining an interconnection agreement and permits can take anywhere from a few weeks to a few months. Your installer will communicate the expected timelines with you.
- **Installation and activation:** Once your installer has obtained permitting and interconnection approval, the actual panel installation typically takes 2-5 days. If you're adding a battery, allow an extra day or two for testing. The municipality and your utility will inspect and authorize your system before it becomes operational.

5. Enjoy the Benefits of Your Solar System and Share Your Experience!