

# PV Partners Program - Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. What subsidies are available for my photovoltaic or PV system?

- Rebate from CPAU's PV Partners program
- Tax credit on Federal Income tax (30%) for tax-paying entities (not available for non-profits or the public sector).
- NOTE: The California Solar Initiative (CSI) and New Solar Homes Partnership (NSHP) are only available for customers of investor-owned utilities, such as PG&E.

## 2. Can you recommend a solar installer?

- The City of Palo Alto is not allowed to recommend a solar installer. Please visit [www.findsolar.com](http://www.findsolar.com) to find a local contractor for your project. Ask those contractors for references and experience with installing systems in Palo Alto.

## 3. When should I apply for my rebate?

You can reserve rebate funds after you:

- Have selected your installer
- Have a contract to purchase your equipment
- Are able to get your system installed and can pass the final building inspection within 12 months (18 months for new construction).

## 4. How large should my PV system be?

- PV systems are sized by the power capacity (kilowatts), and tend to generate about 1,500 to 1,800 kilowatt hours for each one kilowatt of system size. Check with your contractor on the physical size of the system.
- Ideally, you will size your system to generate no more electricity than what your home uses in one year. You will not receive any payment for surplus electricity generated beyond what your home uses in one year. (See Net Metering information below).
- An average Palo Alto single family home uses a little less than 700 kilowatt-hours per month. This requires a system of 4 to 5 kilowatts (kW) in size.
- The most cost-effective PV system size is the amount that reduces your average monthly electric consumption to the electric rate amount of 300 kilowatt-hours. For example: If your average monthly consumption is 700 kWh, chose a system that would generate 4,800 kWh per year (about 2.8 kilowatts in size).

## 5. What factors influence my PV system's performance?

- Once installed, a PV system quietly generates clean electricity with little additional effort required from the homeowner. However, in order to ensure a PV system is as efficient as possible, the following factors need to be addressed: shading, orientation & tilt, and dust.
- Shade is the most critical factor when determining where to place a PV system and how well it will perform. A PV system can lose up to 100% of its productivity due to shade from trees, buildings or hills. Please be aware that you can not require a tree to be cut down or trimmed to improve your system's performance. A good PV contractor will evaluate your location for shade and will factor in future tree growth in locating your system.
- Placing a PV system on the right side and at the right angle on your roof can significantly improve its performance. For Palo Alto residents, placing a PV system on the south, south-west or west side of the roof will increase the amount of sunlight received during daylight hours. Depending on the slope of your roof and the position of your house, PV panels should be placed at a 20-35° angle.
- Dust and ash can also lower the amount of electricity generated from a PV system. PV system manufacturers suggest rinsing off your PV system (using a hose will suffice) two to four times during the dry season.

## 6. How does Net Metering impact my utility bill?

- When your PV system makes more electricity in a month than is used in your home, you will receive a credit on your utility bill. Beginning May 2009, you will not be able to apply the credit towards your other utility charges such as gas and water. All credits will be applied to electricity charges. Net Metered customers will have a 12 month settlement period to apply these surplus credits to their electric charges. Any credits remaining after the annual settlement period will revert to zero.

## 7. How does interconnection work in Palo Alto?

Please note this is *different* from the order of inspections in PG&E-served areas:

- When the applicant applies for a PV Partners rebate, CPAU Marketing Services sends the host customer two copies of the net metering and interconnection agreements for signature. The host customer needs to sign both sets and return before scheduling inspections.
- To physically interconnect the system you need to pull a Building Department permit and install the PV system. Please call the CPAU Electric Meter Shop at (650) 496-6978 for a meter inspection before scheduling your final building inspection.