For Illinois consumers, there has never been a better time to install a solar energy system or other renewable generator. If you generate your own electricity from a renewable source, it used to be very difficult to sell that power back to your utility. In 2008, however, legislation took effect that simplified the process considerably for Illinois consumers. If you own or operate a renewable electric generator, you may be able to interconnect to the electric company’s grid and get a credit for the excess electricity you produce.

This exciting development makes installing your renewable generator much more economically attractive. For example:

• A residential solar panel system in ComEd territory can offset an estimated 32 percent of annual consumption.
• A small business wind turbine system in AmerenIP territory can offset an estimated 55 percent of annual consumption.

Net Metering

What is net metering?
Residential and commercial customers of ComEd, Ameren, and MidAmerican can now participate in “net metering.” This means that if you generate your own electricity using a renewable resource, you can get a credit on your bill for those times when you generate more power than you use. Your utility charges you only for the net amount of electricity you consume.

What types of systems qualify?
You must own or operate an on-site renewable electric generator of up to 2,000 kilowatts (kW) that is used at your home or business. While most participants in net metering will choose to generate electricity using a solar or wind system, other renewable systems also qualify.

Eligible renewable electric generators can be powered by:

• Solar energy (photovoltaic, or “PV”);
• Wind;
• Dedicated crops grown for electricity generation;
• Anaerobic digestion of livestock or food-processing waste;
• Fuel cells or microturbines powered by renewable fuels;
• Hydroelectric energy.

How much will I be paid for the electricity I generate?

Small-scale generators
If your renewable generator produces 40 kW or less, you will receive a one-to-one retail rate credit—meaning the utility will credit you at the same rate at which it would have charged you, had you bought that power.

Large-scale generators
Customers with generators between 40 kW and 2 MW will receive credits equal to the utility’s avoided cost for their excess generation. “Avoided cost” here refers to the cost the utility would have paid to purchase the electricity from another source if you hadn’t provided it. The specific avoided cost rates are laid out in the utility’s tariffs. See your utility’s website for more details.
Hourly pricing customers
If you pay a “time-of-use” rate (i.e. are on hourly pricing), your net metering credits will also reflect the time-of-use rate. You do not have to be on hourly pricing to participate in net metering, although you may want to be, depending on the type of generator you have. For example, people with solar generators could see a big benefit from being on the time-of-use rate, since the sun tends to be strongest at times when electricity is most expensive.

How do I apply for net metering?
For more information, or to apply for net metering, contact your electric utility.

ComEd
Commonwealth Edison Company
Energy Efficiency Services - Net Metering
Three Lincoln Center, 2nd Floor
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181-4260

Phone: 1-877-426-6331
Fax: 630-576-6353

For more net metering information and to download the application form, visit: www.comed.com

Ameren
Ameren Illinois Net Metering Coordinator
607 East Adams, MC Springfield, 10th Floor
Springfield, IL 62701

E-mail: renewablesillinois@ameren.com

For more net metering information and to download the application form, visit: www.ameren.com

MidAmerican
For questions about MidAmerican’s net metering program, call MidAmerican at:
Residential Customers: 1-888-427-5632
Business Customers: 1-800-329-6261

Or e-mail Jeff Hart at: jthart@midamerican.com

For more net metering information and to download the application form, visit: www.midamericanenergy.com


Interconnection
Once the utility approves your net metering application, you’ll have to apply for permission to connect your renewable generator to the electric utility’s system. The utility is allowed to charge a fee for processing your application. This fee varies according to the size of your generator, but for most residential customers, it will be $50. If your generator’s output is greater than approximately 10 kW, the fee will be higher.

Interconnection application for generators of 10 kW or less:
http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/083/08300466ZZ9996AR.html

For interconnection applications for larger generators, see the Administrative Code on Interconnection of Distributed Generation Facilities: http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/083/08300466sections.html
Factors to consider
Your renewable generator and its interconnection equipment must meet several requirements before you can connect to the electric utility’s grid. Below are some of the factors to consider—please note that this is not an exhaustive list. For more details, see 83 Illinois Administrative Code Part 466 (Electric Interconnection of Distributed Generation Facilities). You can find it here: http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/

• The utility must verify that your system will operate safely and reliably on the grid. The technical standard used in evaluating interconnection requests is IEEE Standard 1547. You can find details here: http://grouper.ieee.org/groups/scc21/1547/1547_index.html. Consider using equipment certified by Underwriters Laboratories to meet the UL 1741 standard in order to speed up the process. More information is available here: http://www.eere.energy.gov/de/ul_1741.html

• If you are not currently a customer of the electric utility at the proposed site, the utility can require proof of your legal right to control the site, evidenced by your name on a property tax bill, deed, lease agreement or other legally binding contract.

• You must allow and provide the means for the utility to isolate your renewable generator from its grid if necessary for safety or reliability reasons.

• The utility may require a “witness test” after you construct your renewable generator. A witness test verifies, either by an on-site inspection or review of documents, that the requirements of IEEE Standard 1547 have been met.

CUB is interested in your feedback! Please don’t hesitate to call or email us if you want to share your experiences with net metering and/or interconnection.

If you have any additional questions about these programs, please call CUB, 1-800-669-5556, and ask for Laura Goldberg, environmental outreach coordinator.

CUB works hard to maintain the accuracy and timeliness of this information, but programs often change and/or run out of money. CUB is not responsible for the administration of any of the programs described in this fact sheet. If you are having trouble applying for or receiving benefits from any of the programs described above, please contact the administrator of that program. Please notify CUB if you find any inaccuracies here.