



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

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MONEY-SAVING SOLAR PROGRAM OPEN FOR NEW CUSTOMERS IN 2020, BUT SEPTEMBER 30 DEADLINE APPROACHING

A solar program that is expected to collectively save participants nearly \$100,000 on their electric bills in its first year is now open for new customers in 2020, just as the pandemic and the accompanying financial crisis have heightened concerns about ways to cut costs, the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) said Thursday.

Solarize Chicagoland, now in its second year, offers free educational sessions and volume pricing on solar panels. It's a partnership with CUB, the Midwest Renewable Energy Association, and four counties: Cook, DuPage, Will and Kane. The goal is to bring residents and small-business owners around Chicagoland together to lower the price of solar while simultaneously increasing the deployment of clean energy. The deadline to participate in Solarize Chicagoland is **Sept. 30**—and there's an urgency to sign up as solar incentives are expected to decline after this year.

In addition to offering a lower base price than homeowners can get outside of the program, Solarize Chicagoland has a series of four price breaks as the program hits benchmarks. The program has already achieved the second of four price breaks, which will result in a rebate of \$700 for the average solar installation. This is on top of the state and federal incentives that can cover up to 60 percent of the cost of going solar. Combined, these incentives make 2020 the best year yet for Illinois homeowners to go solar.

“With all the rebates, it makes going solar very affordable,” said Carol Weinhammer, a new participant from Algonquin. “Many people do not realize there are rebates to help cover the cost of the system.”

State solar incentives are made possible by the Future Energy Jobs Act, groundbreaking state energy legislation in 2016 that CUB supported.

“We fought for the legislation that made state-based solar incentives, community solar, and Solar For All possible,” said Sarah Moskowitz, deputy director of CUB. “It's great to be able to take that a step further and let folks know how to take advantage of these new incentives and programs.”

“It feels great to see the solar panels working at a high level right away,” said Chris Kious, Kane County Board Member, who installed solar on his home last year. But those who are interested in participating in the program should not wait, Kious said, because “the sales, planning and installation process takes time.”

The 2019 program achieved commitments to install nearly 1,000 kilowatts (kW) of solar on more than 120 properties in the Chicago area. In their first year of operation, the 2019 solar arrays will offset emissions equivalent to approximately 800,000 pounds of coal burned. Collectively, customers will also save an estimated \$98,300 in electric bills in the first year alone.

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“Of course, there is the environmental aspect of this, and I want to do everything I can to do my part,” said Dan Orum of Elmhurst, a new participant in the program. “At the same time, it has to make financial sense, and after digging in deeper, it is such a great time to go solar in Illinois, I wish I would have joined the program last year.”

The federal incentive declines after this year, and the state incentive is likely to run out this year, raising the urgency of signing up for Solarize Chicagoland before the program’s participation deadline of **Sept. 30**.

Navigating the solar market can be intimidating, creating barriers for solar adoption. To help break down those barriers, the program will directly educate residents about solar through 25 free, public, one-hour informational webinars called Solar Power Hours.

To view the Solar Power Hour schedule and learn more visit www.SolarizeChicagoland.com.

CUB represents the interests of residential and small-business utility customers and has saved consumers more than \$20 billion by helping to block rate hikes, secure refunds and fight for clean, low-cost energy. For more information, call CUB’s Hotline, 1-800-669-5556, or visit www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org.

The MREA was incorporated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit shortly after the first [Energy Fair](#) in 1990. MREA’s mission is to promote renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable living through education and demonstration. To learn more, call 715-592-6595 or visit www.midwestrenew.org.

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