

Governor Rendell Opens Solar Energy Rebate Program for Homeowners, Small Businesses

PHILADELPHIA (May 18) - Thousands of Pennsylvania homeowners and small business owners eager to slash or even eliminate their electricity bills will be able to install new solar technologies at a discount of up to 45 percent, thanks to a new program Governor Edward G. Rendell opened today.

The PA Sunshine Solar Program will provide \$100 million in rebates to help fund solar electric and hot water projects, reimbursing eligible consumers up to 35 percent of the purchase and installation costs of solar energy technology. For an application or more information, visit www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: Pa Sunshine.

In combination with federal tax credits, consumers could reduce system costs by 45 percent.

"Today marks another exciting milestone in Pennsylvania's efforts to achieve energy independence while helping homeowners and small businesses reduce their energy costs," said Governor Rendell. "For years, many homeowners and small business owners wanted to join the alternative energy effort, but they often found solar technology to be cost-prohibitive. Now that the PA Sunshine Program is open, we're making it possible for more consumers to move forward with their solar plans.

By making it easier to install these environmentally friendly technologies, Pennsylvania is helping consumers conserve energy by relieving demand on the electricity grid, which will drive down costs for everyone, the Governor said.

"This highly anticipated program will help families and small businesses lower their energy use, which will cut their bills substantially," Governor Rendell said. "At the same time, they'll be able to generate their own power in a cleaner and increasingly more cost-effective manner. And by using less power off the grid, especially during times of peak demand when the sun is shining and it's hot out, they'll help lower costs for all consumers."

PA Sunshine is part of the \$650 million Alternative Energy Investment Fund Governor Rendell signed into in July. It will reimburse homeowners and small business owners up to 35 percent of the purchase and installation costs of solar energy technology.

The governor made the announcement at the home of Capt. Charles and Lynette Bushka in Philadelphia's Roxborough section. Over the past few years, the Bushkas have made several energy efficient improvements to their home including new windows and doors and adding insulation. They have been waiting for the launch of the state's solar rebate program to enter into an agreement with Heat Shed Inc. to install a five kilowatt solar system on their home.

A five kilowatt system could save a typical household more than 50 percent of its annual electricity usage, or at least 4,230 kilowatt hours, which equates to a savings of approximately \$620 per year. Without the PA Sunshine Rebates the installation would cost \$30,000.

Solar produces the most energy during those times when electricity rates are typically highest - during the sunniest and hottest days of the year.

"Our residents understand how important developing new energy technologies are to our future," said Governor Rendell. "They are showing vision, imagination and a willingness to

depart from the conventional methods of electricity generation and invest in greener, more efficient ways to meet their energy needs. This funding represents the commonwealth's commitment to assist them in that effort."

Homeowners and small businesses wishing to apply for rebates must first select an installer that has been approved by the Department of Environmental Protection. The installer will submit all application materials on the consumer's behalf. Project approval will be granted on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are depleted. Rebates will be dispersed to the home or small business owner upon completion of the project.

The Governor added that solar technology makes sense environmentally by eliminating harmful air emissions that result from the use of traditional fossil fuel energy sources. It also makes sense economically as products on the market today have proven themselves over time to be reliable and effective. By taking advantage of one of our most abundant natural resources, the sun, we can offset peak electricity demand by creating electricity at a time when demand is at its highest.

"While we are making great progress, we must continue to press forward," said the Governor. "As we develop new and more efficient ways of producing cleaner energy, we must not lose sight of the fact that we must also continue to conserve energy and not be wasteful of the energy we do generate. Energy efficiency is often a low- or no-cost way to reduce energy consumption."

For more information, rebate applications for photovoltaic systems, and to view DEP's approved solar contractors, visit www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: Pa Sunshine. Solar thermal applications will be available later this week.