



## **Solar Electric Rebate About To Drop – Again!**

Last October I wrote about how the solar rebate was about to drop from \$1.55 to \$1.10 per watt. What surprised everyone was how fast it dropped – much faster than ever before, and this during an economic recession? The number one explanation, from almost everyone we signed up for a rebate at the time, was that they were concerned about their ability to pay their electric bill in the future. And, given the savings from solar power are greater than the loan cost from the first year forward in most cases, it makes good sense! The number two explanation was “We’re doing it now because it’s finally affordable”, which makes sense because of changes in the Federal Tax Credit combined with a huge drop in solar panel prices.

But now it’s looking like the rebate is about to drop again, from \$1.10 to \$0.65/watt, sometime next month (April 2010). As a result I’d suggest those people that have been “sitting on the fence” or that haven’t asked for an update on their two year old proposal get moving! And always get two or three bids before signing on the dotted line; it can save you hundreds to thousands of dollars for a small investment of time. And I recommend “local companies” for a very good reason. As they say, “forewarned is forearmed”. I’ll use a painfully real example.

One of my all time favorite customers (I’ve had the pleasure of working with him on three projects) was talking to a friend who was excited to report that he’d just signed a contract to get solar power installed. My customer asked “did you get a bid from Sustainable Energy Group?” to which his friend replied “no, but the salesman said it was a one-time offer – that they had these panels left over from a commercial job they did, and Nobody could beat their price!” Apparently this out-of-town company was cold-calling people, asking if they would be interested in solar, and then pressuring the homeowner into signing a contract right there and then. And you thought only vacuum salesman operated that way!?

Anyway, I was told to go over to this person’s home immediately to give them our (local) installation cost. The out-of-town company’s cost was \$28,714 and our cost was \$19,716 for the exact same system. That’s a savings of about \$9,000 (31%). So much for that “Nobody can beat our price”, eh? The next day they cancelled their contract with the out-of-town company (it’s a very good thing that contract law requires a three-day cancellation clause!). This isn’t an isolated incident. It’s clear from the publicly available statistics for the rebate program that local solar companies charge less than out-of-town companies. Not all out-of-town companies try to gouge people this badly, but the moral of this story still stands: get two or three bids and expect the locals to have the lower prices. To find a list of solar companies in your area go here –

<http://www.gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov/retailers/search-new.php>

To track the rate at which the rebates at the current level get gobbled up as we head into April, go here

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<http://www.csi-trigger.com/> (what's available is "megawatts available" minus "megawatts under review").

And in case you didn't already know this, solar companies offer free site visits and they don't take very much time. So schedule an appointment today and save more before the rebate drops - again!

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