

“Up On Top” News

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Photovoltaic Roof Systems

The sun generates enough clean energy in one day to provide a year's supply of energy for your home or office. Why not tap into this abundant resource of clean energy?

One option is the use of a photovoltaic (PV) roof system. Large PV panels, mounted to commercial roofs, are very common, especially in the southwestern states. These panels were often unattractive, bulky, and expensive. However, recent breakthroughs in PV design and technology have produced PV modules that are more compact, efficient, and affordable. They come in all shapes, sizes, and varieties and can be used in both residential and commercial applications.

PV preserves the earth's finite fossil fuel resources such as coal, oil, and natural gas. It also reduces air and noise pollution associated with these energy sources. Also, depending upon where you live and taking into account current

utility pricing, state and local incentives offered in some parts of the United States, and other benefits, PV can be competitively priced with traditional energy sources. PV system reliability and durability are outstanding with systems that typically last 30 years with minimal maintenance.

How does it work?

A common PV system consists of solar cells connected electrically to form a module. All of the modules connected together make up an array. Since the electricity generated by these PV arrays is direct current, an inverter must be used to convert the electricity to alternating current. Batteries may also be added for emergency backup in the event of power outages or in cases where your PV system is not connected to utility power lines. If you do choose and are able to connect the system to the power lines, it is possible to generate electricity for your

power provider and actually make a profit from the system.

How much does it cost?

One disadvantage of a PV system is its high initial cost. A rooftop integrated PV system fully installed can run from \$25,000 and up, depending on the size of the system. This is approximately 18¢-25¢ per kilowatt hour, which is significantly more than conventional grid-connected power. However, when considering environmental benefits and available grants and tax incentives, a PV roof system can be comparable to the cost of conventional grid connected power.

There are also many grants and tax credits that come with the installation of PV systems. A comprehensive list of these grants/tax credits for the United States can be found at the Database of State Incentives for Renewable Energy (DSIRE) Web site at www.dsireusa.org.

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