

*Guest column; Eco-Tip of the week for 7-23-17*

## **Upcoming Workshops Highlight Solar Options for Homeowners**

By April Price. Renewable Energy and Efficiency Specialist, Community Environmental Council

Although the promise of free electricity is appealing, for many Ventura County homeowners, purchasing a solar powered system can be a daunting process. With the variety of options on the market, many feel overwhelmed when deciding which company to work with and what equipment to install. Another major decision is whether to purchase the system outright, finance the system, or to enter into a power purchase agreement with a solar company, in which the homeowner buys the electricity from the system rather than buying the equipment itself.

According to the National Renewable Energy Lab, residential solar power system prices have decreased by almost 60% over the last 6 years. In determining the value of an investment in solar energy, homeowners may compare their current electricity costs to the upfront cost of a solar system, which will produce electricity for more than 25 years. In calculating the expected savings over time, homeowners may also consider the expected increase in energy costs, which may range from 1.9% to 6.3%, depending on assumptions.

In addition to the monthly savings associated with reduced electricity bills, there are also the benefits of Net Energy Metering and the 30 percent federal tax credit to consider in the savings equation. Net Energy Metering is the mechanism by which customers earn credits for the electricity produced by their solar panels, not used right away, and sent back onto the grid. The homeowner can use the credits when they need electricity, for example at night. The 30 percent federal tax credit can be applied to the total cost of the solar power system, including installation, equipment, and even roofing and tree-removal in some cases.

Purchasing a solar power system often provides the most cost savings over time and also increases home values. Solar financing tools have improved in recent years, making purchasing possible for more homeowners. In comparison, a power purchase agreement can save homeowners about 20% each month on their electricity bills, but it is important to consider the details of the agreement, including escalator rates and early termination clauses.

Free solar workshops in partnership with cities, highlighting the Solarize Ventura County group purchase discounts:

**Wednesday, June 28, 6:00pm**

Camarillo Library, 4101 E Las Posas Road, Camarillo, CA 93010

**Thursday, July 20, 6:00pm**

Ventura City Hall, Community Meeting Room, 501 Poli Street, Ventura, CA 93001

**Thursday, July 27, 6:00pm**

Oak View Park and Resource Center, 555 Mahoney Avenue, Oak View, CA 93022

**Wednesday, August 2**

**6:00pm (English)**

**7:00pm (Español)**

City of Oxnard, Community Room, 300 West Third Street, First Floor, Oxnard CA 93030

**Wednesday, August 16, 6:00pm**

Thousand Oaks Library

1401 E Janss Rd

Thousand Oaks, CA 91362

**Monday, August 21, 6:00pm**

Blanchard/Santa Paula Community Library, 119 N 8th Street, Santa Paula, CA 93060

**Tuesday, August 22, 6:00pm**

Newbury Park library

2331 Borchard Road

Newbury Park, California 91320

More information: [www.SolarizeVentura.org](http://www.SolarizeVentura.org)