



8 Questions to Consider Before Installing Solar

Thinking about solar? Consider these factors before installing a solar array at your residence.

1. What are my goals? If your primary goal is to save money on electric bills, you may be able to achieve this through energy efficiency and changing when you use energy. This can be a cost-effective first step in lowering costs. Both strategies can also reduce the size needed for a solar array, which will also save you money.

2. Is my roof suitable for a solar array? Your roof should be in good condition before installing solar panels. If it is old or in poor shape, it may need to be replaced before panels can be installed. Additionally, consider how much sun and shade the roof receives and if any trees will need to be removed. A ground mounted array may be more beneficial. It can be directed for optimal performance and eliminate the need to have added penetrations in your roof. Solar arrays perform best when they are facing south and west based on Linn County REC's Time-of-Day rates and demand.

3. How long will I own the home? If you're considering solar, you're likely planning to stay in the home for several years. But if you plan to sell the home at some point down the road, consider that not all potential buyers will want to maintain a solar system. If you enter a contract to lease the system, carefully review the terms and what those mean if you decide to sell the property.

4. Lease or purchase? Purchasing a solar array outright is expensive, which is why some homeowners opt to finance or lease their array.

a.) Whether you purchase outright or finance, know your payback. Many Linn County REC members who install solar panels may have a reduced electric bill, but few eliminate their bills.

b.) If you lease, know the terms for roof repairs/replacement and selling the property. Some companies require that any work done go through their contractors. This could mean delays in getting a roof repaired or replaced or not being able to choose your own contractor. Selling the property can bring up challenges as the potential buyer must agree to the terms and conditions of the existing lease.

Speaking of contractors, here are several factors to discuss with them upfront:

5. Can the contractor provide current documentation? Request documentation of the contractor's licensing, permitting, and other credentials. Check company reviews and the Better Business Bureau. Also, check if they are local or out of state. Do your homework before signing a contract.

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Thinking About Solar?

Use the following questions as a guide before entering a contract to install solar.

Initial Questions

- Do you plan to stay in the home long-term?
- How old is your roof/how much shade does it get?
- What are your goals? (If it's to save on energy bills, consider an energy audit first.)
- Will you lease or purchase?

Utility Questions

- How will you need to work with Linn County REC to connect the solar system? (An interconnection agreement must be signed.)
- How long will the process take?

Contractor Questions

- Can you provide licensing, permitting, and insurance requirements?
- Can you show documentation of safety practices?
- Can you provide credentials?

Contract Questions

- Do ownership terms make sense/seem fair?
- Do the calculations seem realistic?
- Do the terms change if you sell the property?
- How long is the system warranty?
- Who is responsible for system maintenance?

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6. Does the contract seem reasonable and fair? If you decide to hire a contractor to install solar, carefully read the contract's fine print. Do the system performance calculations seem realistic? Does the project timeframe sound reasonable? Negotiate the contract terms to fit your goals and needs.

7. Who will maintain the solar panels? Determining who maintains the solar array will depend on who owns the system. If you lease the system from the solar company, it may be their responsibility. Solar arrays need to be cleaned, as dirt and debris can impact panel productivity. Parts may also need to be replaced, so knowing who will take on these responsibilities is essential.

8. How will I work with Linn County REC? Contact us if you decide to install solar or any other renewable energy source. If the system is connected to the electric grid, you are required to go through the interconnection approval process before installing the system.

As with any major home project, do plenty of research upfront, and contact Linn County REC if you have questions or decide to move forward with installation. For more information and to review our interconnection packet, visit www.linncountyrec.com.



Annual Meter Testing Begins In April

Linn County REC will begin performing our annual meter testing this month. Approximately 500 meters throughout our service territory have been randomly selected to be tested.

Members who have their meters checked may experience a brief outage (one to two minutes). Testing will begin in April and continue until all meters are completed.

Linn County REC reads your meter using an advanced metering system. This system also provides daily usage data so you can make informed energy choices. Members can view usage data through our SmartHub app.

SmartHub offers many benefits to members. You can manage your account, view your daily usage, and report service issues. To learn more and create an account, visit our website.

If you have questions about our metering, call to speak with our metering department or email us at metering@linncountyrec.com.



Landscaping To Save Energy

Q: How can landscaping help lower my energy bill?

A: Thoughtful planning and good design can result in year-round energy savings.

Carefully positioned trees can save up to 25% of a typical household's energy use, according to the United States Department of Energy (DOE). When selecting the right trees and other foliage, research what's best for our climate.

Strategically placed deciduous trees provide summer shade and passive solar heat gain in the winter when leaves have fallen, which can lead to savings in the summer and winter.

Slower-growing trees might take longer to provide maximum shading benefit, but their roots are typically deeper, and the branches are stronger. These factors can make them less likely to be damaged by wind, snow or ice, and be more drought resistant.

Keep in mind that if you have a rooftop solar array, even a small amount of shade can significantly reduce energy production. Consider smaller plantings closer to the home to shade walls, windows, or hardscaped surfaces, such as driveways and sidewalks.

Windbreaks (such as evergreen trees) can also be beneficial for energy savings in windy areas. The DOE says windbreaks reduce wind speed by as much as 30 times the windbreak's height. That, in turn, reduces wind chill near your home and can lower heating costs. The DOE recommends planting two to five times the mature tree's height away from your home. Keep landscaping clear of dryer vents, heat pumps, and air-conditioning units to ensure access for maintenance and airflow around those locations.



When landscaping, always consider safety first. If planting trees and shrubs are part of your landscaping projects this year, don't plant under or near power lines. Trees interfering with power lines are one of the top reasons for power outages. Storms and winds can also cause branches to rub on power lines, causing blinking lights in your home.

Before you plant trees, consider their mature height. Take the mature height and plant it that distance from the power line. If limbs grow near power lines, Linn County REC may trim the tree to prevent damage to the line and eliminate potential hazards and outages. We will not trim beyond what is necessary to ensure public safety and service reliability.

As you prepare to refresh your yard for the coming spring and summer, consider ways you can boost your energy efficiency for more comfort and savings year-round.

April is Safe Digging Month!

Whether you're planting a garden or installing new fence posts, remember to dial 811 before you dig. Let's work together to keep our communities safe and prevent damage to underground utilities.

5 STEPS FOR SAFE DIGGING

Working on an outdoor project? Always call 8-1-1 first, because you never know what's below. Here are five easy steps for safe digging:

Source: call811.com

1. NOTIFY Call 8-1-1 or make a request online two to three days before you start. 	2. WAIT Wait two to three days for a response to your request. Affected utilities will send a locator to mark any underground utility lines. 	3. CONFIRM Confirm that all affected utilities have responded by comparing the markers to the list of utilities the 8-1-1 call center notified. 	4. RESPECT Respect the markers provided by the affected utilities. They are your guide for the duration of your project. 	5. DIG CAREFULLY If you can't avoid digging near the markers (within 18-24 inches on all sides, depending on state laws), consider moving your project. 
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Eliminate the clutter and never lose a bill with Paperless Billing! Access your bill anytime, anywhere and get payment reminders.

Going paperless is easy! Sign up for paperless billing at www.linncountyrec.com or in the SmartHub app. Don't have SmartHub? Download the app for free in the App Store or Play Store.

Sign-up is easy through SmartHub:

1. Log on to your SmartHub account
2. Go to Settings (left navigation bar)
3. Click Paperless Billing
4. Switch Go Paperless toggle to ON
5. Click Yes on the paperless settings pop-up



Cheesy Cheddar Broccoli Casserole

- 1 can cream of mushroom soup, undiluted
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1-1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese, divided
- 1 can (6 oz) french-fried onions, divided
- 2 packages (16 oz each) frozen broccoli florets, thawed

Preheat oven to 325°. In a large saucepan, combine soup, sour cream, 1 cup cheese and 1-1/4 cups onions; heat through over medium heat, stirring until blended, 4-5 minutes. Stir in broccoli. Transfer to a greased 2-qt. baking dish. Bake, uncovered, until bubbly, 25 - 30 minutes. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese and onions. Bake until cheese is melted, 10 - 15 minutes.



New Substation To Energize North Liberty

Linn County REC is close to completing a new substation in North Liberty. The Kansas West substation will be energized in April. This building project, which began in the fall of 2024, will expand energy capacity to serve the west side of the city in response to growth in the North Liberty area.

The new substation has a 10/14 MVA capacity and will be able to distribute electricity to more than 2,000 homes. It is the third substation to be established in this area since 2018. With the addition of Kansas West, Linn County REC now owns 36 distribution substations.



We celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day to honor the men and women who power life! Rain or shine, day or night, lineworkers brave challenging conditions to make sure we have electricity when we need it. Thank you!

ElectricCONNECTION, the official publication of Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative, is published monthly for members of Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative, 5695 REC Drive, P.O. Box 69, Marion, Iowa 52302. © Copyright 2025
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