



Solar Net-Metering Buying Guide

As hydro rates continue to increase each year, the cost of generating power with solar has continued to decrease. So much so, that you can now produce your own solar power for less than the price of hydro. That means you can lock-in free solar hydro today and not worry about hydro rates moving forward. With over 20 years experience in solar, the team at Friendly Fires is here to assist every step of the way.

Solar Power Explained

Solar power is generated by harnessing the free power of the sun and transferring that power from the sun into hydro with the help of solar panels typically installed on a roof.

What is 'Net Metering'?

Net Metering is the technical term used in the solar industry for home (or cottage) owners who generate their own solar power and remain connected to the hydro grid. This enables home owners to use the grid when appropriate but generate free hydro when the sun is shining. Sometimes net metering is confused with 'off grid' or 'MicroFIT'.

An *off-grid* system is when a customer is not connected to the hydro grid and has many batteries to locally store hydro. These systems are much more expensive to set-up and leaves the home owner vulnerable should there not be enough stored power in his / her batteries.

The term *MicroFIT* refers to a subsidy program offered by the Ontario government in order to popularize solar power. This program offered home owners a 20 year contract to purchase hydro at a pre-negotiated rate. As the regular price of hydro has spiked and the cost of solar power gone down, this program was no longer required and has essentially been phased out.



How expensive is solar power?

At current hydro rates and with a proper roof layout (south / west / east facing), it is less expensive to generate hydro with solar panels than to purchase it. As hydro rates continue to increase, the cost benefit analysis continues to improve for everyone who has solar panels already installed on their roofs. The earlier panels get installed, the higher the benefit.



What happens when my panels are not generating hydro?

When solar panels are not generating enough hydro for your home's consumption (at night, certain winter months, etc...), then nothing will change and you'll simply be purchase hydro from the local utility.

What happens when my solar panels are generating more hydro than my home requires?

When your solar panels are generating more hydro than you require (summer day), then your local utility absorbs that hydro and provides you with a credit. For example, its not unusual for our customers to have negative hydro bills in the summer (yes – negative). This hydro credit slowly gets used up over the winter months. Hydro will allow you to keep the credit for 12 months so its important that your system not be over-sized.



What savings should I expect?

With a 5 kilowatt Net Metering system, most Friendly Fires' customers save 50% on their existing hydro bills. Although larger systems are sometimes possible (ie – economical), anything over 10 KW becomes more complicated with the local utility. In addition, with a Net Metering system some hydro charges disappear entirely off your bill – such as the **delivery charge**.

How can these numbers be trusted?

These numbers can be trusted as Friendly Fires: has over 20 years experience in installing solar systems; uses 60+ years of climate data from Natural Resources Canada for production estimates; and follows a structured process. After a customer provides a deposit, we send our solar certified installers to your home or cottage, measure your roof, assess shading, and then build your solar system in a virtual 3D environment.

How much do solar Net Metering systems cost?

A solar net metering installation will range from \$20,000 (5 kilowatts) to \$35,000 (10 kilowatts). This price includes engineering, installation, high quality solar panels (20-40 panels), rust proof racking, high quality fasteners, power inverters, and certified wiring. Price does not include taxes.



Are battery back-ups available in case the grid goes down?

Technically – yes. Recommended – no. Should power outages be frequent in your area, we could custom design a back up, but economically, the payback on a backup is not there.

When does solar net-metering not make sense?

A solar net metering system does not make sense when:

1. The home owner is not connected (or does not want to be connected) to the power grid
2. The home (or cottage) does not have a large enough room facing south, east or west (require 400-800 sq.ft.) and / or the roof has a lot of shading
3. The local utility does not allow it (local utility will only allow a limited number of solar installations in each area)



Are monthly payments available?

Yes, low monthly payments are available for solar net metering systems.

What maintenance is required?

Once a solar system is properly installed, no regular maintenance (other than home owner monitoring) is required.

Are Friendly Fires' solar systems the cheapest available?

Yes and no. Because of our purchasing power, Friendly Fires receives preferential pricing on many of our solar components. However, there are a number of factors that can influence the cost of a system. A Friendly Fires system may be more expensive than out of town suppliers or mass merchants as:

1. Quality components: Friendly Fires uses the highest quality components for the solar panels, inverters, fasteners, as well as the wiring. This ensures we are maximizing the sun's power and reducing the chance of replacement parts. Of the thousands of solar panels installed, no Friendly Fires solar panel has ever been replaced.
2. Engineering: Friendly Fires has full time solar engineering and solar installers on staff. We do not sub-contract. Our Solar Engineer will engineer your system ensuring maximum sun exposure, our full time installers (solar trained) will install it, and our full time service department is there to assist should there be a problem after installation.



3. Experience: Friendly Fires is one of the largest solar companies in Ontario and we have 4 physical showrooms where customers can visit, discuss, and contact us after installation with any questions or concerns.

I want free power – next steps

If you're interested in cutting your hydro bills in half, please bring into Friendly Fires:

1. Your past 12 hydro bills
2. General description of roof orientation & size (rough drawing)
3. A digital picture of the roof & home

With this information, we'll be able to determine if you are one of the lucky people who can cut their hydro bills in half for life.

Why Friendly Fires?

As there are a lot of great solar companies in our industry, we hope you chose us for our people. Other great reasons why our customers return for our high level of service include:

- Friendly Fires has over 20 years designing, installing, and servicing solar in Ontario
- Friendly Fires 100% price match guarantee ensures you are making a wise investment
- After installation, we will come to your home to show you how to operate your solar system
- We treat your home like our home: We only use full-time licensed installers.
- We service what we sell. Friendly Fires has a full-time in-house service department
- Our technicians are clean, personable & certified trained
- Friendly Fires is 100% covered by liability and WSIB insurance.
- After any solar purchase, you automatically get enrolled in the Friendly Fires Customer Preferred Program – offering you valuable discounts on your future service, fireplace, BBQ or solar purchases.
- We focus and care: Friendly Fires is your Solar specialist



Don't take our word for it – feel free to browse comments from some of our 10,000 and growing customers at www.friendlyfires.ca.