



Solar Rebates

Austin Energy originally envisioned a 10-year solar rebate program to help spur solar development. This strategy has been embraced by a number

of utilities across the country recognizing that, as the price of solar comes down, solar rebates could be reduced and eventually phased out. The cost of solar panels has dropped significantly over the past year alone and is projected to continue dropping through technology improvements.

As a result, Austin Energy has reduced its solar rebate from \$3.75 to \$2.50 per watt. The program, which has provided some of the largest rebate levels in the nation, has distributed more than \$18 million in solar rebates since its inception in 2004. That has helped fund the installation of more than 900 rooftop solar systems by residential and commercial customers and increased the number of companies installing systems from three to 24.

Another change in the solar rebate program is a requirement that residential customers make key energy efficiency improvements (if needed) to their home in order to qualify for a solar rebate. Austin Energy provides rebates or zero percent interest loans on all major home improvements.

The utility also plans to revise how it will assist solar installations by businesses, the apartment community and non-profit customers. The goal is to develop an incentive based on the output of solar installations rather than a rebate based on the size of an installation. New guidelines for businesses will be developed with the goal of implementation by this January.

Helping Customers with their Utility Bills



Almost 13,000 City of Austin utility customers took advantage of a one-time 6-month utility bill payment plan option made available due to the record summer heat. The payment plan was available to customers who signed up by October 1, 2009, and who made a down payment of at least 25 percent of their outstanding balance. The remaining balance was divided into six equal monthly installments to be paid along with their current monthly utility bill charges. City of Austin utility payment plans are generally limited to four months of overdue balances.



Significant Utility Bill Discounts

The City of Austin provides utility bill discounts to low-income customers that total about \$480 a year for an average user. The discounts are available through the **Customer Assistance Program (CAP)**. Customers automatically qualify for the discounts if they are receiving benefits under one of a half dozen federal, state, county or municipal assistance programs. Visit www.austinenergy.com for a list of the qualifying assistance programs and for an application form. Utility bill discounts are currently provided to more than 5,000 low-income customers.



Emergency Assistance

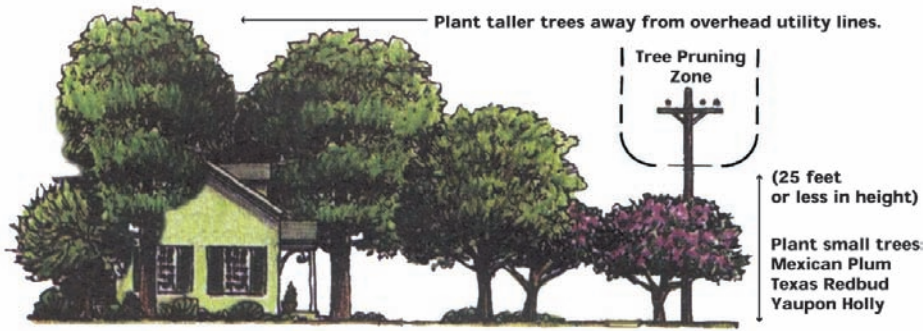
Customers facing extraordinary emergencies, such as loss of job or medical emergencies, may be eligible for emergency utility bill payment assistance through the Plus 1 program. This past fiscal year, assistance was provided for more than 1,500 families. Applications for utility bill emergency funding should be made to one of the 16 service agencies who administer this assistance for the City of Austin. The list of agencies is available at www.austinenergy.com.



Free Energy Efficiency Improvements

Free additional attic insulation, duct sealing, solar screens, weather stripping around doors and more is available for the homes of low-income customers, even for rental homes. This excellent program also makes minor repairs if needed, such as replacement of entry doors that do not fit properly, so that energy improvements can work. Call 974-7827 to apply.

Time to Plant Trees



Fall and winter are the best times to plant shade trees. Cooler weather allows root systems to establish, resulting in greater growth during the spring and better tolerance of hot summer temperatures. Once mature, trees can reduce home summertime air conditioning costs by as much as 15 percent. The best trees for height and shade include pecan, elm and oak. They will shade your home during summer months but lose their leaves during winter, allowing sunlight through to help keep your home warmer.

It is important to plant the right tree in the right place. Large shade trees should be planted at least 50 feet or more away from power lines. Trees growing into power lines are the number one cause of power outages during storms and windy weather.

Tips for planting. Dig the hole the same depth as the container, but two to five times as wide. After placing the tree and refilling the hole, put a three-inch layer of organic mulch around the tree. Water regularly and deeply to establish a healthy root system.

We plant trees. Austin Energy provides funding for the planting of about 6,000 trees every year through four programs. The Neighborwoods program provides free trees to home owners in neighborhoods where tree canopy is needed. The Community Trees program provides free trees to neighborhoods that have a neighborhood plan and an organized group to assist with tree planting. The Large Shade Tree program provides trees for public projects, such as the trees around City Hall or along 2nd street. The Austin Energy Tree Trimming program provides trees when rotten or sick trees require removal during the pruning process.

Pay Your Utility Bill Online



More than 23,000 City of Austin utility customers pay their utility bill online each month through the City's Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) program. Sign-up is easy and, once enrolled, a draft on your bank account occurs automatically to pay your utility bill each month on its payment due date. This gives you ample time to receive and review your utility bill first.

Visit www.austinenergy.com or call 494-9400 to sign up for EFT.

Austin Energy Speakers Bureau

Austin Energy has excellent speakers on a variety of topics for your business or community group. Topics include:

- ✓ Customer Assistance Program
- ✓ Free Thermostat Program
- ✓ Green Power
- ✓ Energy Efficiency
- ✓ Streetlights
- ✓ Green Building

To schedule a speaker or power plant tour for your group, call 322-6144.



\$50 For Your Old Refrigerator

Austin Energy will pay you \$50 for each old working refrigerator or freezer (limit two per customer). Just call 1-800-452-8685 to arrange for a pick up. To date, we have collected more than 15,000 of these energy guzzlers. Next to heating, cooling and hot water, **refrigerators and freezers use more electricity than any other home appliance.** Refrigerators that are at least 15 years old use about twice the electricity of today's new energy-efficient models.

Para una Traducción en Español:

Si gusta recibir este folleto en español, llame a Austin Energy al 972-9523.



Customer Service Center: 494-9400

Hours: Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.; Weekdays 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

24-Hour Power Outage Reporting: 322-9100

