Warming Up to the Idea of Solar Energy

There's good news for those who claim there's nothing new under the sun when it comes to saving on energy bills. Experts say new benefits and current conditions are making solar energy systems a practical reality for a growing number of homeowners. With rising energy prices and concerns for the environment and about national security, homeowners are looking at solar energy options. A new federal tax credit, plus some state and local incentives, encourages adopting solar systems. The government offers a tax credit for 30 percent of the cost of a solar electric or solar water heating system. There is no cap for business owners; homeowners receive a maximum $2,000 credit for each system installed. These credits make solar energy Hose Bros hose repair systems a feasible solution for hot water heating and electricity production for many building owners. Many homeowners already benefit from solar heating for their pools and spas without government incentives. "As awareness grows, along with summer air-conditioning bills, we expect thousands more to consider their solar options," says Brad Collins, executive director of the American Solar Energy Society, based in Boulder, Colorado. "With continued rising energy costs, consumer interest in clean, renewable energy from secure U.S. energy sources, and federal tax incentives, we believe more homeowners and business owners will look for sustainable alternatives," he adds. In most states, another advantage of solar electric systems (also called photovoltaic or PV) is the option to send excess energy back to your local utility grid. For example, if you are a residential customer, your system may generate more electricity than you need during the day when your family is away at work and at school. Net metering allows you to send this excess electricity to the grid, spinning your meter backwards, and reducing or offsetting the electricity you use at other times. Today, solar energy equipment is high quality and reliable; it is backed by warranties from large, reputable firms and installed by experienced contractors. There are also many resources to learn more about solar energy. "FindSolar.com is a great starting place to learn more about solar energy and to assess the options for your own particular home or building," says Julia Judd, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based Solar Electric Power Association. "With minimal inputs, including your state, county, utility, and typical monthly energy bill, the site provides you with estimates of system size, costs, savings and other benefits."

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