

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE NEW JERSEY CLEAN ENERGY PROGRAM™

Solar Power Hits Suburban Home

In many ways, Ian Stocks is the prototypical solar electric power early adopter. As a software analyst, he's technical and analytical. As an environmentally conscientious citizen, he keeps abreast of the latest developments in alternative energy products. And as a businessman, he knows how to forecast a positive return on his investment.

Now that Stocks' suburban home has a solar electric power system to support his electric system, he can satisfy his scientific, environmental, and financial inclinations. He has a state-of-the-art photovoltaic power system working for him. He's helping to clean the environment through reduced reliance on fossil fuels. And he will eventually realize a positive return on the money he spent on his home system.

"I have always been interested in alternative energy technologies," said Stocks. "There is a lot of documented proof about the effects of carbon dioxide emissions seeping into our atmosphere. I feel strongly that we have to break away from fossil fuels and our dependence on coal and gas-fired sources of energy, but it will not be a sudden transformation."



Photograph courtesy of PSE&G

Funding and Finding

Stocks' personal solar electric transformation was not sudden either. Before he could take step one in his quest for solar electric power for his home, he had to determine if he could afford the initial capital outlay. Historically, the high cost of solar electric systems has been a barrier, even to early adopters, and Stocks was no different.

"At first, paying for a solar electric system was cost prohibitive, but after my wife noticed an advertisement in *The Star-Ledger* about the New Jersey Clean Energy Program's 60 percent rebate for solar power installations, we decided to make it happen," said Stocks. The rebate shaved \$11,000 off the installation. Stocks predicts that his \$9,000 investment in solar electric power will start paying dividends in about



Photograph courtesy of PSE&G

This 24-panel solar electric system (manufactured by AstroPower and installed by Jersey Solar) reduces 6,467 lbs. of CO₂ annually, the equivalent of an average passenger car traveling 8,083 miles. To calculate the energy production and emission reduction your home could experience using a solar electric power system, go to the Clean Power Estimator at www.njcep.com.



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10 years. In the meantime, his electric bills have dropped 25 percent each month, even in the winter.

To find a solar energy solution for his home, Stocks searched on the World Wide Web, which led him to a solar power module manufacturing company called AstroPower. It was on that Web site that he found Jersey Solar, based in Hopewell, New Jersey, which has completed nearly 25 solar electric installations in New Jersey this year, according to Rick Brooke, founder and president of Jersey Solar.

Brooke recalled the Stocks' installation. "It took two days to mount and wire the solar electric modules and to have a licensed electrician complete the interconnection to the PSE&G grid. The equipment must meet stringent requirements for safety and power quality and, at the same time, be aesthetically pleasing. In Ian Stocks' case, the solar panels have a beautiful blue crystal surface and are angled with the roof, which makes them unobtrusive."

Attracting Sunlight and Attention

The 24 solar electric modules on the Stocks' home do indeed blend in, but they have hardly gone unnoticed by neighbors and PSE&G professionals. "On the day that PSE&G inspected the system, there were about 18 technicians in a dozen trucks at my house," said Stocks. "They had heard about it on the radio and wanted to see my electric meter go backwards, which is what happens when the solar electric system starts to provide power to the grid."

His home has become the talk of the neighborhood, a quiet, tree-lined street in Essex County. Even the Stocks' children field questions about solar electric power in school. Yet, although Stocks takes pride in being the first on his block to go solar, he doesn't want to be the last.

"All great things start slowly. I just hope that we're helping others to find out about ways to help the environment. It's not for everyone, and the costs are considerable, but it's all relative to your priorities. The solar electric panels cost twice as much as a new roof, but I spent that much on landscaping. The difference is that the system pays for itself, and I feel good about helping the environment."

Rick Brooke likens the decision of going solar to buying versus renting a home. "With conventional electricity, you are basically renting the power, but with solar, the power is yours. You own it. It earns you money. If you predicted how much money you would spend in electricity over 20 years versus how much you would save with solar, most people would make the switch. Essentially, it's your own tax-free generating system without the noise and emissions."

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