

# Understanding your Utility Bill with Community Solar

## Overview

Every month, solar power is generated through your solar subscription. The amount of solar energy produced directly results in discounts to your monthly utility bill. This document explains how community solar interacts with your bill.

## Utility Bill + Community Solar

This section will help explain your bill as it exists now (before community solar), and explains the changes that will be made once you are signed up for community solar. Check out the sample bill provided by your utility company for examples.

## Sections of Utility Bill

### 1) Normal Utility bill charges

These costs are based on your electricity consumption, taxes, fees, and adjustments—this does not include community solar! After signing up for community solar, you will continue to be billed for the amount of electricity you consume every month in the usual way.

### 2) Bill Credits

These are monthly discounts that you earn based on the amount of solar energy (measured in kWh) produced through your solar subscription. Bill credit rates are determined by your utility company:

	Portland General Electric	Pacific Power	Idaho Power
<b>Use kWh rate (\$/kWh)</b>	\$0.12/kWh	\$0.11/kWh	\$0.10/kWh
<b>Bill Credit Rate (\$/kWh)</b>	\$0.11	\$0.10	\$0.08
<b>Subscription Fee Rate (\$/kWh)</b>	\$0.09	\$0.08	\$0.07

*Rates are rounded to the nearest cent*

### 3) Subscription Fees

Participants pay monthly fees that are based on the amount of solar energy (measured in kWh) produced through your solar subscription. Subscription fees are applied according to a per-kWh rate (\$/kWh) determined by your utility company but are **always lower than your bill credit rate**. In general, subscription fees are calculated at 80% of your bill credit rate.<sup>1</sup> The 20% difference between bill credits and subscription fees accounts for your monthly discount! Rates can be found in the table above.

### 4) Total Utility Bill

Your total electricity bill is calculated by subtracting your solar discounts from your electricity costs.

Electricity costs (fees + normal utility charges) – bill credits = Total bill
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<sup>1</sup> Some projects offer greater discounts. Special circumstances apply for projects involving subsidized housing participants.



#### Normal utility bill charges

900 kWh x \$0.1201 kWh

**\$108.09**



#### Community solar subscription

Bill credits: 500 kWh x \$0.11234 kWh

Sub. Fees: 500 kWh x \$.08987 kWh

**- \$11.23**



#### Total

**= \$96.86**

**Total Monthly Discount: \$11.23**  
**Monthly Percent Discount: 10.4%**

### Total Annual Discounts:

Most participants of the Oregon Community Solar Program can expect savings between 10-15% on their electricity bills every year! Your annual discount will depend on the size of your subscription and your utility company. To learn more about how this works, please refer to our [solar savings document](#).

## Additional Information

In order to further understand your utility bill, it is important to understand how electricity consumption is measured and how charges are calculated based on that consumption.

### 1. How Electricity Consumption is Measured

Everytime you turn on a light bulb or plug in a device in your home, you are consuming electricity. The rate of power a device uses when it is turned on (or plugged in) is measured in watts or kilowatts (1000 W = 1 kW). The rate of power a device consumes over time is measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh).

A couple infographic examples:



$$\begin{array}{r} 100W \\ \times \\ 10 \text{ hours} \\ \hline = 1 \text{ kWh} \end{array}$$

A single 100W light bulb that stays on for 10 hours is equal to **1 kWh**.

If it stays on for 20 hours, it will use **2 kWh**.



$$\begin{array}{r} 1 \text{ kW} \\ \times \\ 1 \text{ hour} \\ \hline = 1 \text{ kWh} \end{array}$$

A washing machine that uses 1000W or 1 kW of power and stays on for a 1-hour cycle will consume **1 kWh** of energy.

### 2. How does my consumption show up on my bill?

Your utility bill depends on a number of factors:

- Your electricity rate plan (Example: time of use (TOU) rate, fixed rate, tiered rate)
- Fees
- Taxes
- Adjustments specific to your utility company and location

The simplest way to calculate your monthly utility bill is to understand that the charges and fees you pay are largely (but not wholly) based on the electricity you consume in a given month (kWh) multiplied by a per-kWh(\$/kWh) rate determined by your utility company.<sup>2</sup>

**We are here to support you with any questions or concerns you have about the program.**

If you find that you need extra assistance, please contact Community Energy Project,  
our low-income nonprofit partner:

**CommunityEnergyProject.org**

*Community Solar Coordinator*

971-544-8718

971-544-8720 (for Spanish)

[solar@communityenergyproject.org](mailto:solar@communityenergyproject.org)

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<sup>2</sup> Per-kWh rates for utility companies participating in the community solar program found in table above.