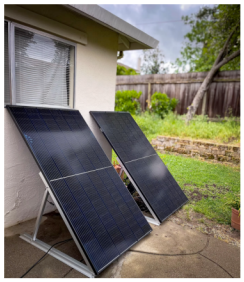
Solar for Every Vermonter:

A New Way to Plug In and Save

Until now, harnessing solar power in Vermont generally meant owning a home with a sunny, suitable roof. That's changing. A new generation of simple, small-scale solar systems that complement currently-available, traditional rooftop and backyard arrays has the potential to make clean energy accessible to nearly everyone.



Imagine a small solar system (one to a few solar panels) on your balcony, patio, or in a sunny spot in your yard. It takes about as much time to set up as it takes to assemble a bookshelf from IKEA, then you simply plug it into a standard outdoor wall outlet. This is plug-in solar - already used by millions in Europe and around the world - and it's a game-changer for any Vermonter who can't install a traditional rooftop or backyard solar array but still wants to lower their energy bills and use clean power, wherever they live.

Solar That Fits Your Home, Wherever You Live

The greatest advantage of plug-in solar is its accessibility. It breaks down the biggest barriers that have kept many people from adopting solar energy. This technology is a perfect fit for:

Renters: You don't need to own your property or modify the building you live in. If you have a sunny balcony, patio, or yard, you can generate your own electricity. And when you move, you can take the system with you.

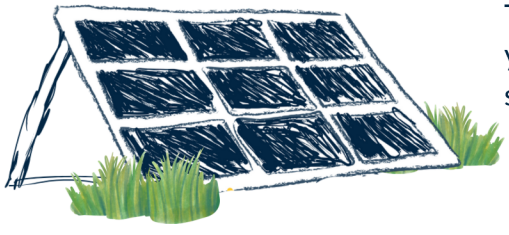
Condominium owners: For those living in multi-unit housing, where rooftop access is shared or restricted, plug-in solar can often provide a personal, independent solution.

Homeowners with unsuitable roofs: If your roof is shaded by a neighbor's trees, faces the wrong direction, or your property otherwise isn't compatible with a larger solar installation, you can still benefit from solar.

How It Works: Plug In and Pay Less

The concept is straightforward. When the sun is shining on your panels, the clean electricity they produce flows directly into your home's wiring through the outlet.

Your appliances—like the refrigerator, television, washer, or whatever else you need to power—will automatically use the solar power first, before pulling any power from the electrical grid.



This means you are purchasing less electricity, which directly lowers your monthly bill. Every bit of energy you generate yourself is money saved. It's a simple, direct way to take control of your energy costs.

What Vermont Needs to Do to Enable Plug-In Solar

To unlock the full potential of plug-in solar, Vermont needs to update its energy regulations. The current rules for connecting generation to the grid were designed for larger, traditional solar installations and are unnecessarily complex and costly for these simple, small-scale systems.

A clear legislative path is needed, similar to a bill recently passed in Utah with unanimous bipartisan support. The key elements for Vermont would be:

A Simple "Right to Plug In": Legislation should clearly state that utility customers can connect certified, small-scale solar systems to a standard wall outlet without needing a complex interconnection application or paying any fees. You'd let your utility know you've got solar you're plugging in, and that would be it - no red tape, no wait.

Emphasis on Safety: The law must mandate that any system sold or used in Vermont meets established national safety standards, such as those from Underwriters Laboratories (UL), to ensure it is safe for the user and the electrical grid.

Clarity for All: The rules should provide a straightforward framework for residents, landlords, and utilities, establishing that these certified systems are permitted and do not require the same oversight as other, larger solar systems.

By adopting this kind of common-sense, safety-focused legislation, Vermont can remove the regulatory hurdles and empower thousands more residents to participate in the clean energy transition.

An Added Bonus: Resilience with Battery Storage

It's important to understand that for safety reasons, these plug-in solar systems do not provide power during a grid outage on their own. Just like traditional solar arrays, when the power goes out they power down, to avoid putting any power on a grid that lineworkers will be repairing.

However, they offer an additional benefit when paired with a separate portable battery station. You can use the solar panels to charge the battery during the day, creating a reserve of stored power. If a storm causes an outage, you can unplug essential devices from the wall and plug them into your charged battery station. This can be a lifeline, allowing you to keep a few lights on, your phone charged, and your internet router running until power is restored. This backup capability is an optional feature, but one that adds a valuable layer of security. With over 40% of new portable solar systems in Europe being paired with a battery backup and battery costs declining, it's a combination that's getting more appealing and affordable every year.

For Vermonters, plug-in solar represents a powerful new opportunity. It's an easy, affordable, and flexible way to save money and embrace clean energy, making the benefits of solar a reality for more people than ever before.

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