

Massachusetts Raises Caps on Solar Net Metering



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Tuesday, April 12, 2016

Massachusetts has raised the caps on the Commonwealth's net metering program. The governor's signature was inked on April 11, 2016 on a bill approved by the legislature last week, after months of negotiation.

Net metering programs allow homeowners and other solar customers to sell excess power they generate back to the electrical grid in exchange for a credit. Each utility has a cap on the amount of large-scale projects that can receive credits in their area. Existing net metering caps have been reached in much of Massachusetts, inhibiting further solar development in the state.

The new law, seen by many as a compromise between the competing interests of solar advocates and utility companies, will lift the cap by 3 percent (from 4 percent to 7 percent of peak load for privately owned systems, and from 5 percent to 8 percent for municipally owned installations) for public and private projects. While expanding the amount of eligible projects, the new law will lower the rate of individual credits by 40 percent for most new large-scale development.

The law also allows utilities to apply to state regulators for a "monthly minimum reliability contribution," which is a fixed charge to the owners of solar systems. Utilities argue that these fixed fees are justified to offset financial burdens imposed on non-solar customers through the use of the utility's electric distribution system

by net metering customers.

Single-phase systems below 10 kW and multiphase systems below 25 kW, such as residential rooftop arrays, are exempt from the cap and reduced payments. Further, existing systems that are already connected to the grid are grandfathered in under the old rates for a period of 25 years.

Additional information on the net metering in Massachusetts can be found [here](#) and a copy of the bill that was signed into law can be found [here](#).

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