



Commonwealth Solar Hot Water Program Frequently Asked Questions

November 18, 2011

Eligibility-Related Questions:

Q: In what town must I reside in order to be eligible for the Commonwealth Solar Hot Water Program?

A: All systems receiving rebates must serve residences of one to four units located in an electric utility territory that contributes to MassCEC's Renewable Energy Trust Fund. This includes all four investor owned utilities (NSTAR, National Grid, Unitil and Western Massachusetts Electric), as well as [participating Municipal Light Plant Communities](#). Please note that rebates are not confined to systems that use electricity as a backup fuel – all backup fuels are eligible.

Q: What fuel must my current water heating system displace in order to be eligible to receive a rebate from the Comm Solar Hot Water Program?

A: Any fuel (natural gas, oil, propane, biomass or electricity) may be used as a backup to the solar water heater.

Q: Can I take advantage of the Commonwealth Solar Hot Water Program rebate as well as the state tax credit, the federal tax credit and utility rebates?

A: Yes, MassCEC's Commonwealth Solar Hot Water Program rebate is in addition to all of the other incentives currently offered for solar hot water systems.

Q: I currently have a solar hot water system in my home. It needs repairs. Could I be considered for the rebate for this purpose?

A: The Commonwealth Solar Hot Water Program rebates are only for new, whole systems.

Q: The collector I want to use has interim SRCC certification – is it still eligible?

A: Collectors with Interim SRCC certification may be deemed provisionally eligible for rebates. However, systems must be installed and collectors must have achieved **Final** SRCC Certification within 12 months of the date on the award letter, otherwise the rebate will automatically be forfeited.

Q: If I recently received a rebate under the Commonwealth Solar II Program, for a residential photovoltaic installation, am I still eligible to apply for a Commonwealth Solar Hot Water rebate as well?

A: Yes, customers are eligible to receive both Commonwealth Solar PV and Commonwealth Solar Hot Water rebates.



Q: I already purchased a solar ready storage tank in anticipation of setting up a solar hot water system in the future. Am I still eligible to receive a Comm Solar Hot Water rebate?

A: Yes, system owners who have already installed a solar ready tank are eligible for a Commonwealth Solar Hot Water rebate. However, while the rebate is calculated based on the collector performance, the rebate is capped at 25% of total installed costs. Total installed costs in this case would be the balance of system costs, excluding the cost of the solar tank.

Q: I'd like to replace my existing 30 year old solar thermal system. Would this new system be eligible for a Comm Solar Hot Water rebate?

A: Repairs of existing solar hot water systems are not eligible for a rebate. However, replacement systems will be eligible for a rebate, as long as the majority of the system is being replaced, including collectors, and the tank, however owners may use existing piping or racking.

Rebate-related Questions:

Q: What does it mean the rebate is capped at the lesser of \$3,500 or 25% of system costs?

A: The maximum rebate that any system or any building can receive is \$3,500 or 25% of total installed system costs.

For example, if the SRCC rating is 20 kBTU/panel/day and the system has 8 collectors (or panels), the calculated rebate would be: $\$25 \times 8 \times 20 = \$4,000$. However, the rebate would be capped at \$3,500. Or, if the calculated rebate was \$2,000, but the system cost \$6,000, then you would only be eligible for \$1,500 (25% of the total system cost).

Q: I am interested in purchasing two solar hot water systems for my two-unit home. I own the entire building and would like a solar hot water system for my unit as well as for the rental unit. Would I be eligible for rebates on both systems?

A: Yes, both systems would be eligible for a rebate. However, the rebate is capped at \$3,500 per building, so both projects combined will be eligible for a maximum rebate of \$3,500.

Other Questions:

Q: Does MassCEC have a list of approved or recommended vendors for installing solar hot water systems?



A: No, MassCEC does not have an approved installer list. Please visit SEBANE's list of solar hot water installers here: http://sebane.com/sebane_info/members_list.asp?id=13.

Q: I have questions/comments about the program technical requirements. Who should I direct my questions to?

A: All questions/comments should be submitted to solarhotwater@masscec.com. As part of this program, MassCEC is forming a technical advisory committee. We plan to refer technical comments to the committee for further consideration.

Q: My existing water heating system is no longer functioning correctly and I'd like to install a single tank solar hot water system. Do I have to wait until I receive the award letter to install the hot water tank or can the contractor install the hot water tank and then wait to install the rest of the solar systems after we receive the award letter?

A: MassCEC will allow costs related to solar storage tank installation for single-tank solar hot water systems incurred up to six (6) months prior to the date of the award to count toward Total Project Costs. In other words, if a solar storage tank is installed up to six months before MassCEC awards the system a Comm Solar Hot Water rebate, the costs incurred will be eligible to be counted towards Total Project Costs. This is important because the rebate is traditionally capped at 25% of Total Project Costs that are incurred after date of award, but in this case we'll cap the award at 25% of Total Project Costs, including the tank costs that may be incurred before the date of the award.

However, MassCEC will require a letter from the System Owner acknowledging that current water heating system has failed and that the installer is going to install a single-tank SHW system. This letter will be included as part of the invoice as documentation to prove the eligible cost of the tank.