

# Frequently Asked Questions

## SFA Hotline & Email Questions

**Q: What is the status of my application? Why haven't I received benefits yet?**

**A:** We can confirm that we received your application, but it may take up to 2 - 6 months before you start receiving benefits; the timing depends on the construction of community projects and availability of subscription space. We appreciate your patience.

**Q: My benefits disappeared from my Pepco bill - what happened?**

**A:** We are aware of the situation and have alerted Pepco about this issue. We are actively working with Pepco to fix the billing issue and will try to have Pepco compensate for the month(s) of missed benefits.

**Q: Will Solar for All impact my LIHEAP benefits?**

**A:** Participation in Solar for All will not impact your LIHEAP benefits in 2020 and will not impact your ability to receive LIHEAP assistance in the future. However, LIHEAP is a program that must be renewed on an annual basis and therefore responds to changes in funding and need. Every year, LIHEAP benefits are calculated based on energy usage and need.

As a Solar for All participant, you will receive CNM credits for 15 years. Unlike LIHEAP, the benefit is not adjusted on an annual basis, and you will only need to reverify income every three years. Overall, Solar for All should be seen as a complementary benefit to LIHEAP. Over time, it is possible that you will gradually need less bill assistance from LIHEAP as your Solar for All benefits accrue. Yet participation in both LIHEAP and Solar for All will never result in less energy assistance than if you solely received LIHEAP benefits.

**Q: I received a debit letter from Pepco, what does it mean?**

**A:** Pepco recently had a series of billing errors for community solar credits in June and July. If you received the letter Pepco, it means that you were one of the affected customers. The debit letter explains that Pepco added too many community solar credits on your June and July billing statements. In other words, your Solar for All credits were front loaded during those two months, and Pepco will adjust your September bill to account for the extra credits. Overall, as a Solar for All participant, you should still expect to save up to \$500 annually.

## **Solar For All Program**

### **Q: What is the Solar for All Program?**

**A:** The Solar for All Program managed by the Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) was established by the Renewable Portfolio Standard Expansion Amendment Act of 2016. The intent of the Act is to expand the District's solar capacity, increase the amount of solar generated within the District, and provide the benefits of locally-generated solar energy to low income households, small businesses, nonprofits, and seniors. Solar for All's target is to provide the benefits of solar energy to 100,000 low-income households and reduce their electricity bills by 50% by 2032.

### **Q. How do residents qualify for Solar for All?**

**A:** District residents can participate in Solar for All if their combined household income meets the required threshold. For details visit: <https://doee.dc.gov/solarforall>

### **Q. How long does it take to own the Solar Panels?**

**A.** It will take 15 years to own the Panels.

### **Q: Is a credit check required?**

**A:** No credit check is required to participate in Solar for All.

### **Q: Will I have to take out a loan or otherwise pay for the system?**

**A:** Participation in Solar for All is at no cost for eligible District residents, so no financing or repayment is necessary. The program is funded through the Renewable Energy Development Fund.

### **Q: If I rent my home can I qualify for Solar for All?**

**A:** Yes, renters may qualify for Solar for All. Renters must meet income eligibility requirements and pay their own electricity bills. If the property owner is income eligible, but not the renter, then the renter does not qualify for Solar for All. Visit [doee.dc.gov/solarforall](https://doee.dc.gov/solarforall) for the Solar for All Income Verification Guidance details.

### **Q: What happens if I move (Rooftop Solar)?**

**A:** The solar array remains on the house and the benefits are transferred to the new homeowner or tenant.

### **Q: What happens if I move (Community Solar)?**

**A:** If your new house is still in the District and you still pay your own electricity bills, then you can keep your community solar subscription. The subscription is tied to your Pepco

account number and will move with you when you transfer the Pepco account to your new address. If for any reason your subscription is canceled during your move within the District, please contact the Solar for All hotline at (202) 299-5271, or email [solarforall@dc.gov](mailto:solarforall@dc.gov) and we will help address your issue.

**Q: Do Solar for All program participants have to pay for the solar installation?**

**A:** The solar installation is at no cost to eligible District residents who participate with Solar for All.

**Q: How can a resident verify Solar For All program participating contractors?**

**A:** Contact the Solar for All hotline (202) 299-5271, email [solarforall@dc.gov](mailto:solarforall@dc.gov) or visit the web site [doee.dc.gov/solarforall](http://doee.dc.gov/solarforall).

**Q: What if you cannot install solar on your roof?**

**A:** Solar for All provides a community solar option for residents who cannot put solar on their own roofs. Community solar projects are located in the community and are typically much larger than rooftop systems. The Solar for All program will allocate each community solar participant with a portion of the community solar system, and they will receive Pepco bill credits for the solar generated at the community solar system, the same as if the system was on their roof.

**Q: Where can I get more information about the Solar for All?**

**A:** Visit the Solar for All web site [doee.dc.gov/solarforall](http://doee.dc.gov/solarforall), call (202) 299-5271 or email [solarforall@dc.gov](mailto:solarforall@dc.gov) for more information.

**Q: What are SRECs?**

**A:** Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SRECs) are tradable certificates that reflect the renewable energy attributes of electricity generated from solar systems. An SREC is produced when a solar energy system generates 1000 kilowatt hours (kWhs) of energy. Energy suppliers in the District must purchase a certain quantity of SRECs each year to demonstrate compliance with the District's renewable energy targets. The value of SREC in DC is among the highest in the country and can be an important element of financing a solar system.

**Q: What is solar power?**

**A:** Solar power is energy generated by sunlight. The sun is a renewable energy source. Sunlight is converted to usable energy by solar cells on solar panels through the photovoltaic effect. Energy generated by solar panels may be delivered directly to a home or business when rooftop panels are installed, or the energy could be delivered directly to the power grid via a Community Solar facility.

**Q: What is renewable power?**

**A:** Renewable power, or renewable energy, is energy produced from naturally regenerating sources, which do not deplete when used (for example you have to keep filling up your car with gas after you use it, whereas the sun shines just as much no matter how much energy solar panels draw from it). Examples include solar power, wind power, and geothermal power. Supporting renewable energy sources helps supply the power grid with clean energy, rather than fossil fuels, which means we can breathe cleaner air and help the world avoid the devastating effects of climate change.

## **Community Solar**

**Q: What is community solar?**

**A:** Also known as shared solar, community solar is a program where solar energy is produced by an offsite solar facility and where local residents and businesses can subscribe to receive energy credits. Community solar allows District utility customers to benefit from solar energy and support clean energy generation without installing rooftop solar panels on their property.

**Q: What is a Community Renewable Energy Facility (CREF)?**

**A:** The term used to identify a community renewable energy generator that shares the power generated with members of the community, who subscribe to that system for a share of the energy, located in the District (typically a solar system).

**Q: What is Community Net Metering Credit?**

**A:** A line item on a subscriber customer's Pepco bill that indicates the value of the customer's share in the CREF Facility's generation output for that billing cycle.

**Q: How does community solar work?**

**A:** The Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) provided grants through the Solar for All program for partner organizations to build and operate offsite solar facilities throughout the District. These solar facilities are open to subscription from income-eligible residents to claim a portion of the project relative to their household electricity usage. The solar energy generated by the subscriber's allocation is sent directly to the power grid, and the subscriber receives solar credits, or Community Net Metering (CNM) credits on their electricity bill for the same solar output.

**Q: What are the benefits of Community Solar?**

**A:** Community solar offers an easy way to support locally-produced, clean solar energy generation. When you go solar, you are helping to send more renewable energy to the

power grid and reducing our dependence on fossil fuels. Because Solar for All partners build and maintain the offsite solar facilities, there is no installation on your rooftop, no home inspection requirement, and no ongoing maintenance. Additionally, there are no costs, upfront or for the duration of your participation in Solar for All. Over the course of each year, you will save approximately \$500 on your household's electricity bills. Lastly, the construction and maintenance of local solar facilities provides new local jobs for our community.

**Q: How is Community solar different from rooftop solar?**

**A:** Rooftop solar refers to solar systems located on the roof of a home, where the benefits of that system go only to the owner of that home. Whereas community solar refers to a way of sharing the benefits of a larger solar system among various members of a community. Those community members may be located miles away from the community solar system. Each member of the community who subscribes to the community solar system is given a portion of the energy produced by that system.

**Q: Is this a program with my utility company?**

**A:** No. Participation in Solar for All and community solar does not replace your electric distribution utility (Pepco). When you become a community solar subscriber, you will continue to receive a bill from Pepco for your standard energy charges. Your bill will include a separate line item showing the Community Net Metering (CNM) credits you have received from Solar for All.

**Q: Will I still have a utility bill to pay?**

**A:** You will continue to receive a monthly electric utility bill from Pepco but will begin to receive solar bill credits (called "net energy metering" or "CNM" credits) that will partially offset your utility bill. You will continue to pay Pepco for the balance on your electricity bill as usual.

**Q: Will the solar energy generated zero-out my utility bill?**

**A:** The solar energy generated probably won't zero-out your utility bill, but it will result in significant bill savings. The solar energy generated will be credited to your utility bill at the residential retail electricity rate. The solar systems are sized such that the bill credits should offset approximately 50% of your electricity bill on an annual basis. Depending on your monthly electricity consumption and the solar generation, your actual bill offsets may be higher or lower than 50% of your total bill in a given month, but should even out to about 50% over a 12-month period, or about \$500 annually.

**Q: Why do you need my utility bill and other information?**

**A:** DOEE needs this information to verify your eligibility for the program and to connect your solar system with your electric utility account so you can start receiving bill credits.

**Q: How does community solar billing work?**

**A:** Once enrolled, you will receive a “Community Net Metering” or “CNM” credit on your bill that represents your share of the energy generated by the community solar system for that monthly billing period. That credit will reduce the amount you owe on your monthly bill. The amount will change month to month depending on the production of the community solar system, which is generally highest during the summer months when there is more sunlight.

**Q: When will I start receiving a bill that includes my community solar subscription?**

**A:** The process may take up to 9 months for people with a community solar/Solar for All subscription, but can be a much quicker process, depending on when the person signs on to the program.

**Q: When will I receive my first solar credits?**

**A:** You will receive your first solar credits from Pepco after you are added to the Pepco list of subscribers, which could take up to 4 - 9 months.

**Q: How is the Solar for All Program funded?**

**A:** The Solar for All Program is funded through the Renewable Energy Development Fund (REDF), which is a fund paid into by electricity suppliers to comply with the District’s renewable energy goals. The REDF was established to, among other things, support the creation of new solar energy sources in the District, including funding for the Solar for All Program.

**Q: Is there a minimum number of subscribers a CREF must have?**

**A:** Yes. A CREF has to have at least two (2) Subscribers at all times.

**Q: How can I learn more about Community Solar?**

**A:** Pepco has additional information on the community solar program at [Community Solar DC](#). There is also a useful FAQ at [Community Solar FAQs](#).

**Q: Can I still sign up for SFA Community Solar if I am on Budget Billing?**

**A:** Yes, you’re still eligible to sign up for SFA Community Solar and receive full program benefits even if you are on budget billing. You will still earn monthly solar credits, but you may not see savings from bill credits earned until Pepco’s budget billing annual reconciliation occurs (approximately every 6 months).