



Myths and Misconceptions about Solar Energy for Your Home

By Terry Chriswell with Eric Krohn, Golden Solar

If you're like me, you don't know very much about solar energy, but you hear about it all the time. In Colorado, with 300 days of sunshine a year, it's probably a good investment, right? You know it would be better for the environment and will probably save you money in the long run, but that's about it. Here's some of my biggest questions, explained by Eric at Golden Solar.

Solar panels will offset my electric bills when I heat my home and water; is that right and is that the biggest benefit? There are typically two types of residential Solar: solar thermal which heats your water, and solar photovoltaic systems generate electricity. The biggest benefits for both of these types are the reduction or elimination of ever-increasing energy rates by the utility company. Believe me, if the utility companies could figure out how to charge you for the sun, they would!

That's a big project isn't it? Actually, the process from the customer's standpoint is pretty painless. Most systems can be put up in a week or two. Processing the rebates, working with permitting and the inspections are handled by us. It does not require you or your family to leave your home.

How could I ever afford it? Affording a solar system has become much more attractive, when you factor in the tax credit, upfront rebate and performance incentives. We've seen a 70% reduction in panel prices in the past few years. However, the utility company rebates are running out, with no plans to renew. So now is the time to act!

Do I really save that much money by going solar? By going solar, you are hedging yourself against ever-increasing electricity rates, and inflation. Who knows what they will be like in 5 years or in 10 years? I can fix your payment for 20 years on a lease, and more than likely below what you're paying now.

Do I have to hire other people like electricians or do you handle everything? Golden Solar uses professional installers with North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) educated, and a master electrician on all jobs. Not everyone does; you have to be careful that professionals are doing the job!

What do I have to do once you install it? Nothing, you can go by your inverter and we'll show you how to check the production. There is no maintenance, no cleaning the panels or anything. We also guarantee our installation for 10 years. The panels themselves are guaranteed 25 years! The inverters can range from 15 to 25 years too!

What's the deal with government rebates and tax credits? We handle all of the rebate paperwork for you; there are very specific requirements we need to follow. As for the tax benefits that would be for your tax consultant and the client to discuss as I'm not a licensed tax

consultant. However, as an example if your after-rebate price is \$10,000, your tax credit would be \$3,000. The rebates have been set and the clock is ticking. The tax credit is good thru 2015.

Why isn't everyone going solar? In my opinion, the upfront cost has in the past inhibited people from doing this. Now, with prices coming down on panels, and the availability of a zero-down lease, everyone should look at it!

How does it look from the inside? If you keep your panels flush to the roof, at first glance you wouldn't even notice them.

Does insurance cover any problems I might have with it, and would a homeowners association cover it? Your homeowners insurance will cover the system when you own it for things like hail. However, leased systems are covered by the leasing company.

So is it just big mirrors on the roof? What are they made out of? No, there are no mirrors. What is on your roof are solar radiation collectors. They are mainly made out of silicon, the second most abundant element on Earth. Silicon panels have no toxic components.

What happens if they don't work or they leak? They rarely require maintenance because there are no moving parts. They come with a 25 year warranty. In fact, there are panels that still produce from the 1950's! If they become damaged, you should contact the contractor who installed them to have it replaced.

What happens on a cloudy day? On a cloudy day there is still radiation that hits the panels, producing some electricity. You will typically be sending your electricity to the utility company during the day and drawing from it at night. That's what we call 'net metering.'

What happens if there's a hailstorm? Solar panels are designed to withstand a 1' diameter hailstone at terminal velocity. For the rare storm with larger hail, homeowner's insurance or leasing company insurance covers the panels.

Do they provide light inside like a skylight? No, they do not.

What are some differences between solar contractors? Some contractors do multiple things, such as roofs, electrical work and construction. Others like Golden Solar specialize in solar electric design and installation. Another difference is certifications, financial stability of the company, where they are based and the materials they use.

And what should I look for when choosing one? I would choose one that is Colorado owned and operated to keep the money here as much as possible. I would also choose one that has certifications and can use a variety of high quality panels – including US made panels. I would also check them out with the Better Business Bureau.

Why does the utility company offer rebates if the panels are taking business away from them? They are required to by a state law passed by the voters in 2004.

What's the catch? In the metro area, the utility companies charge everyone a fee on their statement which helps fund the rebates and performance-based incentives. So in essence everyone is supplementing the loss of revenue to the utility company! Examine your bill!

How does the market look for electricity rates in the next few years and beyond? Electricity rates will increase, especially if we have inflation in future years. I think that if you can go solar, and reduce your carbon footprint, everyone will benefit.

Eric Krohn is the Solar Coordinator for Golden Solar in Golden. 720-278-5253 or Eric@GoldenSolar.net. GoldenSolar.net.

"Before choosing Golden Solar, I carefully researched solar photovoltaics in general and many solar dealers in particular. Several companies seem good, but Golden Solar stood out way above the rest. They exceeded my highest expectations, not an easy thing to do because I am a very fussy consumer who wants things done right the first time." – A Golden Solar Satisfied Customer

