

Information Sheet

June 13, 2007 - UCNSB teams up with University of Central Florida researchers to study solar energy demand of homeowners

The Utilities Commission, City of New Smyrna Beach, is proud to announce a partnership with researchers from the University of Central Florida to study solar energy interest within our community.

UCF Economics Department researchers will conduct focus groups and send out surveys to UCNSB customers to measure demand for solar energy. The results will yield important demographic data of the customer base and could be utilized by UCNSB to determine the possibility of starting a solar energy program.

The study will also assess increasing public concerns over global warming and fossil fuel dependence. Research will include discussion of the utility's Green Pricing Program, in which customers contribute to the funding and upkeep of the three UC-owned photovoltaic systems in the city.

The utility began a residential solar installation program in 1998 after the State of Florida provided partial funding through the Florida Solar Energy Center (FSEC). The homeowner and UCNSB then contributed the remaining costs of the installation, which totaled about \$12,000. However, the state contribution ended, and the four-year UC pilot program was not renewed after 2002. A total of 10 residential installations were completed during the pilot program.

Interest in residential solar began anew following the approval of state rebates for the installations. Two more residential customers have since installed solar panels on their homes, utilizing the state rebates. All customers of the UC with solar installations benefit from net-metering, a program which allows the UC to credit the customer for the difference in energy between what is used and what is produced.

In several recent public meetings, the Utilities Commission has pledged to explore and support the use of alternative energy projects in our community. The UC just issued a request for proposals to build an alternative energy power plant to help supply approximately 25% of the utility's peak energy load. It is expected to be online and operational by 2012.

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