



Using solar as backup power

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Most people think about electricity one way: Turn on a light, pay the utility for it. (Grumble about how expensive it is and turn the light off.) But when you go solar with a battery backup system, you get a whole host of ways to use--and optimize--your power.

Battery storage for solar panels offers some obvious, and not-so-obvious benefits, depending on how you use it. Eric Kilens, senior solar advisor at Granite State Solar, explains the different battery modes.

Battery Backup Mode/ 100% reserve

"Most people are interested in batteries for battery backup mode," says Eric. "A customer can use his or her battery for a backup power for primarily their critical loads like their well pump, their heating system, refrigerator, freezer, essential lights, and maybe some outlets to power light electronic equipment."

Think of it as a generator, with some major upsides. It starts automatically when the power shuts off (it's so seamless, you might not even notice that there's been an outage). There's zero maintenance. And it runs on the power of the sun collected by your panels, so you never have to worry about filling up the tank.

This last one is particularly important because, during an outage, solar panels without a battery won't work. "With a normal grid-tied system without a battery, when there's a power outage, the solar array will automatically shut down," explains Eric. "This is a safety requirement." But not so if you have a battery. The battery acts as a brain between your home and the grid so your panels can continue to safely produce power.

Solar During Power Outages

When you have solar, any extra power your panels produce gets sent back to the grid (and you get compensated for this thanks to net metering). During an outage, however, this puts linemen at risk of being electrocuted if they have to go out and work on power lines. So, as a safety measure, the solar panels automatically turn themselves off.

Except when you have a battery. Regardless of what usage mode you use, having a battery means your panels will continue to produce during a power outage. The battery disconnects your home from the grid during a blackout and safely stores the power your panels produce.

How does it compare: battery backup vs. a generator?

Batteries offer some very real upsides over generators. In the event of an outage, your home seamlessly switches over to the battery. Cost-wise, batteries are more expensive than generators, but the sticker price is



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not the full picture. When you pair a battery with solar, you can take advantage of incentives like the investment tax credit and net metering. Plus, you're likely protecting more of your home than you would with a small, portable generator. Best of all, the fuel is free, with clean sunlight, not gasoline. And as long as there's sun, your battery will continue to recharge itself.

Utility Battery Programs

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