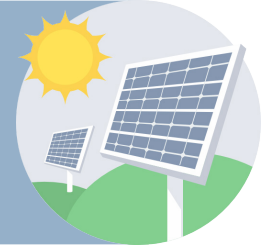


# RENEWABLE ENERGY

## *What You Need to Know*



Buying or leasing solar panels or other renewable energy systems is a big decision. Consumers should do their homework, check prices from several sources and think carefully about which choice is best. South Carolina law gives consumers specific rights in this area, too. Here are some key things to know while thinking about buying or leasing a renewable energy system.



### BASIC TERMS TO KNOW

A **renewable energy facility or system** makes electricity through solar, wind, hydroelectric, etc.

A **retailer or seller** is a person or business that sells the system or owns a leased system.

A **lead generator** is a person who finds potential customers for a retailer.

A **lease** is a contract where you pay a monthly amount for a set period of time to use the renewable energy facility and the energy it makes. You will not own the system.

A **purchase** is when you pay for the system up front with cash or with financing (i.e., home equity line, bank loan, use credit card). You will own the system.



### QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN

If you're given a price, what's included?

- Are maintenance fees, repairs, property taxes or insurance included?
- If leasing, will monthly fees increase over time?
- Is there a lease buyout option that would allow you to buy the system?

Is there a warranty on the system or install? Is there a production guarantee? If yes, what are the details?

Is the seller or lead generator predicting how much you'll save by switching to a renewable energy system? If they are, how did they calculate the savings?

Are there any tax credits/rebates that you qualify for? Is the credit/rebate shown in the total price? Who gets the credit/rebate, you or the seller?





## RIGHT TO CANCEL

A consumer has 10 days to cancel the renewable energy system agreement with no penalty or fees. The 10 days starts when the agreement is signed.

The agreement is also contingent on approval of the building permit by a local government authority or the consumer's homeowners association. If either is denied, the consumer has seven days to cancel or amend the agreement.



## GENERAL TIPS & INFO

➔ **Feeling pressured?** Pause and relax so you can think clearly before acting.

➔ **You pick the company, don't let them pick you:** Get references from friends & family. Check to make sure they have the proper state and local licenses. Check SC Department of Consumer Affairs ([consumer.sc.gov](http://consumer.sc.gov)) and BBB ([bbb.org](http://bbb.org)) for complaints.

➔ **Shop around for the best deal:** Get more than one quote. Read paperwork carefully. Make sure you are getting a system that suits your wallet and needs best. Looking to finance? Contact your bank or credit union.

➔ **Watch out for scams!** There are some people out there looking to take advantage of consumers. As you listen to sales pitches, here are some red flags to watch out for:

🚩 You'll never have another utility bill!

🚩 You'll automatically get a tax rebate from the government!

🚩 HOAs can't tell you what to do.

**Remember!** If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!

➔ Check with your utility company to see how your utility bill could change.

➔ Check with your HOA to make sure you are following their guidelines.



## NEED HELP OR HAVE A COMPLAINT ABOUT...

### Solar/system sales or installers, credit issues

SC Department of Consumer Affairs

(803) 734-4200  
[scdca@scconsumer.gov](mailto:scdca@scconsumer.gov)  
[consumer.sc.gov](http://consumer.sc.gov)

### Solar leasing companies or electric utilities

SC Office of Regulatory Staff

(803) 737-5230  
[complaints@ors.sc.gov](mailto:complaints@ors.sc.gov)  
[solar.sc.gov](http://solar.sc.gov)

For more contacts visit:  
[solar.sc.gov](http://solar.sc.gov), click "Consumer Protections", then "Who to Contact..."

### Contractor or installer licensees

Labor, Licensing and Regulation

(803) 896-4300  
[contactLLR@llr.sc.gov](mailto:contactLLR@llr.sc.gov)  
[llr.sc.gov](http://llr.sc.gov)

Also, check with your city or county for permits and licenses.