

# Solar Energy



### *Brief Description*

Solar water heater is an efficient and reliable technology that converts sunlight into heat to produce hot water. A solar water heater can reduce your hot water and heating bill by between 40-70%. In Ireland a horizontal surface of 1m<sup>2</sup> receives an average of between 1,000kWh and 1,200kWh of solar energy per year (the equivalent of 120 litres of oil). Both direct sunlight (40%) and indirect sunlight (60%) provide this energy. So even when the sky is over cast you can't see the sun, its radiation (sunlight) is available at ground level and can be converted into useful heat by solar water heater. On a bright day, any surface standing in the sun will receive about 1,000 watts of solar radiation (a power equivalent to that of 10 strong bulbs).



### *Solar thermal technology*

This type of system typically uses a transparent collector, consisting of a thin, black metal panel mounted on a south-facing wall to absorb the sunlight.

- A solar collector absorbs solar radiation (sunlight) and changes it into heat;
- A pump which transfers the heat from the collector to hot water in a storage tank;
- The storage tank accumulates hot water produced by solar energy so that it can be used when it is needed;
- A back up heater (gas/oil boiler, immersion heater, heat pump, biomass), which will bring the hot water to temperature required when there is not enough sunlight to do so (mostly in winter).

In Ireland, solar collectors alone cannot provide all the hot water for a household's needs throughout the year. They are normally installed in conjunction with a conventional heating system.



### *Types of Solar water heating*

Two main types of solar collectors, both available on the Irish market include:

- Flat plate collectors, with a selective absorber, are well suited for hot water production and low temperature heating. (Typical efficiency of 40%)
- Evacuated tube collectors that are more efficient with higher water temperature and provide solar water heating when solar radiation is less intense. (Typical efficiency of 60%).

### *Uses of Solar water heating*

Hot water from the solar water heating system can be used for

- Central heating
- Swimming pools
- Domestic hot water

### *Installation Costs*

The table below gives you an idea of the size and cost of an evacuated tube solar water heater for domestic hot water, according to the number of people in your household:

<b>Evacuated tube –solar water heating installation for domestic hot water</b>			
Number of people in the house	Area of solar collectors (*evacuated tube)	Volume of the solar hot water tanks (litres)	Indicative initial investment (**)
2-3	2-4m <sup>2</sup>	1/200	€3500/5500
4-5	4-6m <sup>2</sup>	200/300	€5500/€7000
6-7	6-8m <sup>2</sup>	300/400	€700/€9000

(\* ) Area for flat plate collectors. The equivalent area for evacuated tube collectors will be smaller as they have a higher efficiency.

(\*\* ) Price of a complete solar package (collectors storage tank, controller, pump, hydraulic components etc.) excluding VAT "Value Added Tax" and installation. Installation should require two or three days by a skilled installer.

The optimal inclination for your solar collectors is 20 degrees – 50 degrees. But they can be tilted from 30 degrees – 60 degrees without significant loss of

performance. Some solar panel makes can be mounted vertically. Collector panels are most productive when facing south. However they can be oriented between southeast and southwest with out significant loss of efficiency.

**Guide to installing Solar Water Heating**

Adequate space should be left to install the solar storage cylinder (200-300 litres) in a hot press or boiler room.



The optimum area of collector, which might be installed in a dwelling, depends on the hot water demand. It is generally held that 3-5m<sup>2</sup> of flat plate collectors might be right for a family of up to 4 persons; for 5-6 people 4-6 m<sup>2</sup> might be the optimum. The corresponding evacuated tube collector absorber area may be reduced to two thirds of the equivalent flat plate collector.

It is generally expected that a well-designed system will provide the majority (40-60%) of a family’s hot water requirements during the summer months and make a useful contribution during the rest of the year. Solar panels can be mounted in roof or on top of the slates/ tiles.

**Solar Water Heating**

A correctly sized solar water heating system will cover 40 to 60% of your hot water heating requirement with free solar energy. Solar water heaters comprise of a solar collector, pump, controller and a hot water storage cylinder

The capital cost is largely offset by the economy on energy saved payback typically under 7 years. To conclude: the average solar panel receives 450kWh/Yr per m<sup>2</sup> and one could assume that kerosene is the displaced fuel corresponding to 115.6 kg CO<sub>2</sub> saving.

**Cost analysis of installing a Solar Panel in a house (4-5 persons/4-6m<sup>2</sup> of solar panel)**

Typical Solar Panel cost, (supply Install. Commission including)	S.E.I. Grant	Typical Installation Cost,
€3,500 to €5,000	€1,000 to €1,800	€2,500 to €3,200

**Economics of Solar Water Heating in 150m<sup>2</sup> house**

Energy Source	Typical Energy Consumed/generated	Factor for boiler efficiency	Cost per KWh	Typical Annual Cost
Oil	1,800 KWh	0.75	€0.08	€192
Elec.	1,800 KWh	1	€0.17	€288
Solar (4m <sup>2</sup> )	1,800 Kwh	N/A	€0.00	€0

**Solar Panels Grants**

Considering environment and climate change concerns the Irish Government encourage renewable energy solar installations, through grant given by the program Greener Homes Scheme. These installations contribute significantly to Climate Change Obligations and reducer Waterford Dependence on imported Oil.

<b>Solar-Flat Plate</b>	€250/m <sup>2</sup> (to max. of 6 m <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Solar-Evacuated Tube</b>	€300/m <sup>2</sup> (to max. of 6 m <sup>2</sup> )

**Photovoltaic PV**

The photovoltaic (PV) process converts sunlight, directly into electricity.



The equipment required for this process has no moving parts.

In addition, the electricity is generated with no emissions and no noise.

A PV cell consists of two or more thin layers of semi-conducting material, most commonly silicon. When the cell is exposed to light, electrical charges are generated and this can be conducted away by metal contacts as direct current (DC).

The electrical output from a single cell is small; therefore multiple cells are connected together to provide a more useful output. Cells connected in this way are encapsulated (usually behind glass) to form a weatherproof module or panel. Multiple modules can likewise be connected together in order to provide sufficient power for common electrical appliances.

**Grant concerning Photovoltaic**

Currently there is no Grant for photovoltaic in Ireland.

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Waterford Energy Bureau  
 Civic Offices, Tankfield  
 Tramore, Co. Waterford  
 Phone No: 051-395530/395531  
 Fax No: 051-395520  
[www.waterfordenergy.ie](http://www.waterfordenergy.ie)  
[info@waterfordenergy.ie](mailto:info@waterfordenergy.ie)