



Guide to the 2019 Solar Fairness Act

Updating Net Metering in Washington

The 2019 Legislature updated Washington State's solar net metering statute. Here's what the law, [E2SSB 5223](#), says, effective July 28, 2019.

Changes from the previous net metering policy:

- 0.5% → 4%, or June 30, 2029, whichever is sooner
- When and how utilities determine successor rates
- Upon request, utilities must only aggregate 2 meters for new systems
- Establishes new right to generate or store energy for consumption
- True-up date for unused kWh credits changed from April 30 to March 31st
- 100kW project size limit is clarified to be AC

Section 1: Confirming and updating definitions from the old law

(10) Electrical generating nameplate capacity of not more than 100kW AC

(7) Meter aggregation limited to 2 meters: “administrative combination of billing net energy consumption from a designated net meter and eligible aggregated meter.”

Section 2: Cumulative net metering is offered to at least 4% of each utility's 1996 peak power (kWh), or until June 30, 2029

(1) Each electric utility must offer net metering (a)

- On a first-come, first-served basis
- Until the earlier of either June 30, 2029 or upon reaching 4% of 1996 peak demand

(b) Using a standard kilowatt-hour meter

(c) Same fixed charges, no special fees

- Same minimum monthly fee as other customers in the utility's same rate class
- Utilities shall not charge any additional standby, capacity, interconnection, or other fee



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Section 2(3): What's after 4% or after June 30, 2029, whichever is earlier?

Consumer-owned utilities may develop a successor rate after 4% or 6/30/2029

- Must notify WSU extension energy program 60 days in advance of relevant public hearing to allow ample time for public comment and participation [(3)(a)(ii)]

Investor-owned utilities may apply to the UTC for a different rate (3)(a)(iii)

- UTC has 1 year to approve, deny, or approve with conditions to allow ample time for public comment and participation

WSU extension energy program reporting structure

- Starting 7/31/2020, and semi-annually thereafter, must report to WSU their current net metering status [(3)(c)(ii)]
- WSU must publish on its website [(3)(c)(iii)]
 - (A) Each electric utility's progress towards 4%
 - (B) Electric utilities that have provided notice of an alternative rate
 - (C) Electric utilities that have adopted an alternative rate

Grandfathering for net-metered customers

- Consumer-owned utilities: post-4% planning must include a utility policy on the duration of eligibility for customer-generators interconnected at full net metering. The public will have time to participate and comment (see above under “what’s after?”)
- Investor-owned utilities: UTC must determine separately for each IOU that applies for a post-4% rate. The public will have time to participate and comment via the usual UTC process (see above under “what’s after?”)

Section 3: Kilowatt hours credited, and meter aggregation

How net metering works (3)

- (a) If a net-metered customer uses more electricity than they make, the utility bills accordingly
- (b) If a customer makes more than they use, the utility credits the excess kWh to their next utility bill



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Meter aggregation (4)(a): If a net-metered customer requests,

- Excess kWh may be credited to 1 designated aggregated meter on the same or contiguous parcel
- Within the same utility district (d)
- At the same retail electric rate (e)
- Utilities may continue other meter aggregation arrangements made before July 1, 2019 (3)(6)

Annual true-up: March 31 (3)(5)

- A customers-generator's excess kWh may accumulate each billing cycle
- Each March 31, excess kWh are granted to the utility (changed from April 30 to reduce customers' "lost" kWh)

Net metering for multi-family properties (3)(7)

- Owners of multi-family residences may assign net-metered credits to a single designated meter located on the premises
- Distribution of any benefits to tenants is the responsibility of the owner of the net metering system and not the responsibility of the utility

Section 4: Right to store energy

Utilities cannot prevent customers from generating or storing electricity for their own consumption (4)(4)

Section 5: Utility bills to include power usage

Customers' utility bills must include their total kilowatt-hour usage over the most recent 12 months (3)

Section 6: Building Code Council study to encourage renewables

"The state building code council, department of commerce, and local governments shall study the state building code and adopt changes necessary to encourage greater use of renewable energy systems"