

Californians bask in solar energy

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Soaring energy costs, environmental consciousness and financial incentives have combined to make solar panels part of the California housing landscape.

Homeowners see solar panels as a way to be green and save some green, The New York Times said. Architects are incorporating solar systems into custom home designs and developers can provide solar systems and solar-ready wiring in new construction.

The trend began after the state legislature approved the California Solar Initiative, a solar program that offers homeowners rebates in addition to the federal tax credit of up to \$2,000 available since 2006.

If it works as planned, the initiative will spark the installation of 3,000 megawatts of solar electrical generating capacity over the next 10 years, said J.P. Ross, policy director for Vote Solar, an advocacy group. That's equivalent to 30 small natural gas-fired power plants.

Several other states in the Northeast and the Southwest have solar projects in place.

William Leininger, a doctor in San Diego, installed solar panels on his home last year.

"It comes down to personal responsibility," he said. "If I can go electricity-neutral on my house, that's that much less coal we have to burn."

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