



NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: April 22, 2019

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AUSTIN UTILITIES IS EARTH FRIENDLY

AUSTIN, Minn.—

In celebration of Earth Day on April 22nd and Arbor Day on April 25th, Austin Utilities would like to share all the things your local utility does to support our environment. As a public utility we support local needs and we are committed to environmental stewardship and sustainability. Our efforts range from providing energy through a diverse portfolio that includes renewables to offering ways for our customers to use energy wisely.

Did you know that 17% of the electricity delivered to our customers comes from clean generation including natural gas, methane, wind, and solar energy? We are also on track to deliver 20% of our energy from renewables in 2020.

For our customers who want to own renewable energy we support the installation of private solar arrays with a solar rebate program that provides a \$0.50 per watt rebate up for up to 10,000 watts. On a 4-kW system the customer would receive a rebate of \$2,000 to help defray the large upfront cost of installation.

Many customers are unable install a privately owned solar array due to the high upfront cost, a shady site, or perhaps they are renters. For those customers we offer a community solar program called SolarChoice. With SolarChoice customers subscribe to the output of a solar panel that is part of a large solar garden. They make an upfront payment for their subscription then each month for the length of their subscription they receive a credit on their bill for the solar production. AU offers a six-year subscription for \$340 per panel. Estimated production per panel is 501 kWh per year credited at our current rate (2019 rate is \$0.1135). Customer are able to subscribe to enough solar output to equal to 75% of their average monthly usage.

We always encourage our customers who want more solar to first consider how they are currently using energy in their home. When you lower energy use, you lower the amount of solar you need to install and thereby save money. Our Conserve & Save Home Energy Audit program provides a cost effective way to develop an energy action plan. Learn how your home uses energy, receive list of ways you can save energy, along with helpful resources to get the work done. The cost of an audit is \$300 but our customers co-pay is only \$50 – we take care of the rest!

When implementing your energy action plan, take advantage of our Conserve & Save rebate program. With over 30 residential rebate programs you are sure to find one to help defray the cost of your new energy saving appliance or equipment. In the year 2019 to date, we've already paid out over \$530,000 in electric rebates saving our customers over 2.3 million kilowatt hours of energy.

We have partnered with our local nurseries to offer a \$10 Partners in Planting rebate for planting a qualified tree. Carefully positioned trees can save up to 25% of a household's energy consumption for heating and cooling and one acre of trees provide enough oxygen for 18 people for one year and absorbs as much CO₂ as a car produces by driving 26,000 miles.

We were proud to offer the first community electric vehicle charging station available in the downtown municipal parking lot in 2015. The charge station is offset with solar panels to displace any energy that is used to charge vehicles. The use has been light but the electric vehicles who have charged at this station have helped offset 1,031 kg of greenhouse gas emissions; that's like planting 26 trees and letting them grow for 10 years! Since the charge station installation in 2015 cars have used 2,456 kWh to charge their vehicles and the solar panels have produced over 7,000 kilowatt hours of electricity.

If you follow our Connections newsletter or Facebook page you may have learned that customers of Austin Utilities are eligible for a special \$3,500 rebate on Nissan Leaf purchases. We hope to offer more electric vehicle promotions in the upcoming future. Next time you stop out to our office be sure to notice our butterfly garden and solar array in the northwest corner of our grounds. Just a couple more ways we support customers and the environment in the community we serve.

That sounds like quite a bit already, but in addition to all the items above, this week we are launching Project Conserve and Save, in partnership with the National Energy Foundation. This new, educational undertaking introduces local fourth graders to Minnesota's energy resources and the importance of energy and water efficiency reaching approximately 435 students from all elementary schools within the area. One focus of Project Conserve and Save is teaching these students good habits at a young age they will carry with them through a lifetime.

You can see we are very engaged in our community and the stewardship of our environment. After all, at Austin Utilities we make connections for better living.

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Austin Utilities is a municipal utility serving approximately 12,300 electric customers, 10,300 natural gas customers, and 9,000 water customers. Their mission is to offer utility products and services in a safe, reliable and responsible manner in order to enhance the quality of life in our community. Austin Utilities' Board of Commissioners are elected by the consumer-owners of Austin to represent their best interest. For more information on Austin Utilities visit their website at www.austinutilities.com.