

LIPA expects solar-paneled homes to double

April 20, 2012 by MARK HARRINGTON / mark.harrington@newsday.com



The [Long Island Power Authority](#) expects the number of local homes with solar panels to double over the next three years, to 10,000, as local solar industry officials on Friday gave their stamp of approval for a series of authority-sponsored programs to harness more power from the sun.

At the [Amityville](#) home of the [Long Island Power Authority's](#) 5,000th solar customer, LIPA chief operating officer Michael Hervey said Friday that about 40 megawatts of power for the LIPA grid comes from the

rooftop installations -- a number he expects to jump by 17 megawatts a year. One megawatt of solar energy can power 125 homes. LIPA's solar roof program started in 2000, but most of the installations have gone up in the last four years.

Hervey on Friday announced a new LIPA program that will allow for much-larger solar installations. Under the "feed-in tariff" program, businesses and others who install mid- to large-size solar arrays would be able to sell the power they produce to LIPA at 22 cents a kilowatt hour under 20-year contracts. The arrangement is just like those LIPA has with local power plants.

LIPA trustees must approve the initiative.

"It puts renewable [energy] and fossil fuels on a level playing field," said Gordian Raacke, director of Renewable Energy Long Island.

At a solar conference Friday at the Sustainability Institute of [Molloy College](#) in [Farmingdale](#), LIPA director John Little unveiled another program that will allow commercial customers and others to earn credits when they produce more solar energy than they need at their primary locations to reduce power bills at satellite sites. Little said retail chains, hospitals, schools and towns could [benefit](#) from the program, which LIPA trustees must approve.

Solar installers applauded LIPA's moves. David Shieren, chief executive of [Island Park](#) installer EmPower, estimated sites with solar panels could earn \$10,000 to \$20,000 per

megawatt a year.

Installer Sail Van Nostrand, chairman of the Long Island Solar Energy Industry Association, said he wished customers could make more than 22 cents per kilowatt. But of the overall program he said, "It's tight but it's great." Van Nostrand said that while Long Island, largely because of LIPA, leads the state in solar, [New York](#) is "falling far behind" other states. He urged passage of a state Solar Jobs Act that he said would add 22,000 new jobs and 5,000 megawatts of solar energy statewide. Bill Ketcham, the [Amityville](#) homeowner named LIPA's 5,000th solar customer, said his 4.7 kilowatt system installed on his roof in December has saved him \$150 a month on electricity. The \$29,000 system cost him \$9,800 out of pocket after rebates and credits.

[< back to article](#)