



## Pay Back Question



Capturing the full monetary value of solar power is difficult, which explains in a large part why more businesses and individuals aren't doing it. The most attractive benefits of Blue Link Solar Network are pollution reduction, using a renewable resource, supplying power during peak demand, and reducing strain on the utility grid. In addition, by increasing participation in and awareness of solar electricity, Blue Link Solar Network creates a virtuous circle that will reduce costs and other barriers so that more solar energy can benefit the country. Most of these positive externalities are not easily traded for money, although gradually this is changing.

What are the economic benefits associated with reducing acid rain, particulate pollution, or global warming - saving lives, medical costs, habitat, property, and ecosystems? Although the benefits are not easily quantified, it is clear that we need to invest in clean, renewable energy, if for no other reason than the cost of not doing so will be devastating.

Without considering any of these benefits, a Blue Link 480 located in the northeast U.S. will save about \$80 per year in electricity. In the sunniest parts of the country or where utility rates are high, it might save \$120 per year. Savings increase as electricity rates increase—over its 35 year expected life it is possible the system will pay for itself several times over. A few utility companies vary rates according to time of use, making solar electricity even more valuable as demand, rates, and solar production all peak at the same time.

In some areas of the country rebates or tax incentives for solar power decrease the initial cost. (Perhaps someday this will happen on a national level.) Go to [www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org) to see what benefits are available for you.

A promising new market is developing for renewable energy credits, or REC's. REC's are tradable representations of the environmental and other benefits of renewable energy. Measured by the kilowatt-hour, REC's can be sold to utilities, businesses, or individuals. Blue Link Solar Network is launching a program to fund Blue Link systems for organizations our members select using donated REC's. Look for more details soon on the Network page.