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Solar in Massachusetts: Growing strong

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The good news about solar continues to roll in, both in Massachusetts and nationally. According to a report from the SEIA (Solar Energy Industry Association) and GTM Research, the U.S. solar market grew by 76 percent in 2012 to bring the total MW (megawatts) installed to 3,313 -- with an estimated market value of \$11.5 billion. There are now more than 7.7 gigawatts of cumulative solar electric capacity installed in the United States, enough to power more than 1.2 million American households. Massachusetts was a strong contributor to this total, with 128.9 MW installed in 2012, making it the 6th best state for solar and the only New England state to make the top 10. As the SEIA jokingly points out, the state's solar industry made more money last year installing solar panels than the New England Patriots made selling tickets!

The volume of installations in Massachusetts also caused great economies of scale, causing the prices of installing solar to drop 29 percent between Q4 2011 and Q4 2012, according to SEIA data. Solar quadrupled in Massachusetts last year, bolstered by strong financial incentives and a growing desire by businesses to be good green citizens.

So what does this all mean for the future of solar in Massachusetts in 2013? It's clear that Massachusetts will continue to be a top 10 solar state for the foreseeable future as state and federal incentives remain in effect and prices remain steady. As I discussed in a previous article, even without the incentives available for business owners that deploy solar solutions in Massachusetts, solar energy is at grid parity: Over the life of the system, business owners will pay the same for solar energy that they would for energy provided by the local utility. When you add the incentives into the mix, solar stands out as the better solution.

If you are considering whether installing a solar photovoltaic (PV) solar system is the right choice for your business, now is the time to act. This July, the Opt-In Term - the length of time that a solar PV installation is allowed to participate in Massachusetts' Solar Renewable Energy Certificate (SREC) auction -- is set to decrease from 10 years to 8, impacting the overall financial benefit of your system. Only companies that apply for a Statement of Qualification by early June are eligible for the maximum 10-year term.

Once a project is qualified, its Opt-in Term cannot be changed. This rule helps guarantee that solar projects continue to generate a steady source of revenue for a specific term. A professional solar project developer can best explain the benefits of solar for your business and help you choose the best path for financing. Solar is growing strong in Massachusetts - come find out what all the excitement is about!

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