



# STATEWIDE SOLAR TOUR

## Solar Council of South Carolina

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Solar energy systems have been around a very long time, since before the Carter administration, when Jimmy Carter had solar panels installed on the White House. Since that time, politics, public relations and media took the attention of the public toward other issues while our energy focus drifted away, and mining, drilling and other environmental offenses raced along at breakneck speed. Our coal and oil economy flourished.

Here, now, in a new age and new millennium, with carbon burning energy economy problems exposed, we find ourselves re-inspired to begin again with our energy education. This time, the public has its attention clearly focused. Politics are still at play, but science, and now economics, are squarely set to help push this sustainable energy wagon forward. In fact, politicians find it chic to be photographed in front of solar arrays and wind generators, even when they support the opposing industries and policies.

The American Solar Energy Society promotes grass-roots level events to demonstrate solar power at work in residences and small businesses right in our own communities. Seeing is believing, and learning from the challenges others have already faced with new technology makes it easier to explore possibilities with our own homes. In an economy where confidence is low and spending tight, it's hard to dedicate funds or risk borrowing for something that seems unessential or expensive. The truth is, solar energy, especially thermal solar, is simple and inexpensive in the long term, and with financing combined with tax credits, it is not only free, but

pays increasing dividends every month up front. Do you already have investments with that kind of potential? Want to do even better? There are utilities that offer programs for energy efficiency, financing and engineering support, sometimes for free, and throw in low-interest loans to make the decision a no-brainer.

In a nutshell, you can get free help with planning, get financing from the electric company, get tax credits from the state, get tax credits from the federal government and cut your electric bill in half. Your home can be more comfortable, more valuable, and you can have friends over for barbecue picnics to smugly brag about how you've saved the planet and ended up with more cash in your pocket.

This is National Energy Awareness Month, and nationally, tours take place all over the country to boost awareness of successful solar applications right in our own neighborhoods. In South Carolina, the Solar Energy Council coordinates tours in Greenville, Columbia, Charleston and the Grand Strand, simultaneously in all cities, on Oct. 3 from 1 to 5pm.

Solar energy is most effectively used when other conservation measures are first put in place. That's why energy-saving techniques and sustainability through building design, energy efficient appliances and use of "green" materials during remodeling are now a part of the program. Energy storage in the form of batteries, thermal storage, net metering (trading power back and forth over the power lines) and hydrogen energy storage may become an important part of future projects. The "net-zero" hydrogen solar house unveiled in Aiken last month may become a tour stop next year.

If you missed the tour this year, you can call the installers listed and ask if they can arrange a personal tour for you or provide more information on each system. Tour sites in October are as follows:

### **Argand Energy Solutions—Chris Salmon**

740 South Edisto, Columbia

*Demonstration photovoltaic (solar to electricity) system at their offices.*

### **The Home of Suzan Garland**

105 Davis Dr, West Columbia

*Field mounted photovoltaic panels, installed by Argand Energy Solutions.*

### **Sovereign Homes—Allyson Way Hank**

304 Whiskery Ln, Irmo

*Solar hot water heating system installed by Real Value Inc in a LEED-H certified home. LEED is an energy efficiency and sustainability criteria plan for construction.*

### **The Home of Ron Sebeczek**

211 Rolling Creek Cir, Irmo

*Solar hot water system and an 80-gallon storage tank with electric backup.*

*For more info, contact Argand Energy, (803) 253-6674 and Real Value Solar Solutions, (803) 883-8292, or contact the Solar Council directly by calling Erika Meyers at (803) 737-7951.*