People have probably heard a lot about solar energy and are now truly wondering—is solar energy viable? How much does it cost? Does it really work?

Two dates and locations have been scheduled for Energy Expo 2012 where information will be shared on solar energy. The first date will be Friday, April 27 in Holyoke at Phillips County Event Center from 12:30-4:30 p.m.

The second date is scheduled for Saturday, April 28 at Country Steakout Restaurant in Fort Morgan from 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Solar PV panels (short for 'photovoltaic') were introduced. They were big, clunky and costly. At one point, installed cost ran about $6-10 per watt, or around $40,000-80,000 to install enough to replace a whole home's energy consumption. Interest was piqued, but it was not readily attainable. Solar was local, but at those prices, not a lot of people jumped.

Fast-forward 30 years. In 2010, President Barack Obama installed solar panels on the White House, the Denver Museum of Natural History installed solar, and once again, local folks are selling solar panels. Today, they are not clunky, they are much thinner and much more affordable.

Technology has gotten smarter, and, now, people don't have to go "off-grid" to have solar. They can purchase (and now lease) as few as one panel—off-setting how much they buy from the power company. If people produce more than they use, they actually get money back from the power company—though beware—that overage is sold at wholesale rate, not what is paid for power.

To learn more about solar power and cost, CSU Extension is hosting Energy Expo 2012, and bringing in the experts to talk about all of the solar options—making Solar PV once again readily available for the home, business, farm or even a power company.

CSU is bringing in a solar installer (they will talk about the difference between buying and leasing), a power company that has solar in its power mix, COSEIA—the Colorado solar industry association, a clean-energy specialist from campus and the Clean Energy Collective—a company that helps homeowners enter into cooperative agreements with neighbors to have a common location and ownership model, with many beneficiaries.

If one has thought about solar, CSU invites them to Energy Expo 2012. Pre-registration is required by Monday, April 23. Since speakers are coming from across Colorado, lack of registration will result in cancellation of the expo.

For more information, visit bit.ly/solarenergyexpo or call Tim Edgar at 970-522-3200 ext. 276 to request a registration form.

There is a lot of great information about solar energy and several important points. Nothing will be sold at the venue. This is information.

Northeastern Colorado experiences 330 days of sun and the sun resource is better than that of 90 percent of the rest of the whole country. Northeast Colorado is in the perfect location for solar. Regardless of who one's energy provider is, or how much they may already know about solar, CSU hopes that people will learn more at the expo.

Edgar and Rich Mullaney are Community Energy Coordinators with CSU Extension. They are providing information on energy efficiency, conservation of energy and renewable resources to six northeastern counties in Colorado. For more information, contact Edgar at 970-522-3200 ext. 276 or Mullaney at 970-466-2355.

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