

6 takeaways from Bluebonnet's sixth annual Solar Day

By Alyssa Dussetschleger

THIS YEAR, Bluebonnet's Solar Day wasn't just about solar panels. The live webinar included information on electric innovations in battery storage and vehicles, too.

The sixth annual event, on Oct. 16 this year, showcased a presentation from Micah Jasuta of the Texas Solar Energy Society; information and ideas from Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative members Aaron Contreras, John White and Jeff Nelson; and a Q&A about the installation and benefits of solar power systems and battery storage.

If you couldn't join us online that day, watch the recording at bluebonnet.coop/solar. Here are our top 6 takeaways from the day:

1. When you're ready to choose a solar power system installer, the U.S. Department of Energy recommends you get at least three bid proposals. Be skeptical and ask questions of installers before you choose. Talk to friends and family with solar panels, search the business member page at TXSES.org, and read review websites like the Better Business Bureau, Yelp, solarreviews.com and North America's board of energy practitioners at nabcep.org. It's a good idea to ask an installer if they are certified by the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners. Don't just go by star ratings, either. Read the comments and reviews.



Battery storage units like the Tesla Powerwall can save your solar array's overproduction. Photo courtesy Tesla Motors, Inc.

2. Research battery storage options that suit the solar energy you produce. A battery's storage capacity determines how long it can power parts of your home. Common energy capacity ranges from 5 to 15 kilowatts. Battery storage can provide a lot of power in a short time or less power over a long time. Apps and online portals can help you monitor your solar production to maximize its

use throughout the day.

3. Bluebonnet inspects your solar array to ensure it is safe before we connect it to our electric grid. You'll be put on the cooperative's distributed generation rate and get paid for overproduction, which is when you produce more power than you are using and the excess is returned to the cooperative's grid.

4. Battery storage can save your overproduction of electricity for use when the sun isn't shining or during a power outage. Place your battery backup near your breaker panel or in the garage to protect it from the elements. Depending on the brand and size of your battery storage, it may hold enough power to charge all or part of your home from one to seven days.

5. The federal Solar Investment Tax Credit remains at 26% through the end of 2022. It's a credit that can be claimed on your federal income taxes for a percentage of the money you paid to install a solar array. The credit is available in every state and is scheduled to decrease to 22% in 2023.

6. Thinking about an electric vehicle? Consider your driving habits and distances. Avoid "range anxiety" by charging up your vehicle before the power level gets low.

Applications available for Board seats open in 2022

MEMBERS INTERESTED in serving on Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's Board of Directors can run for one of three seats up for election during the Annual Meeting on May 10, 2022.

Candidates can be nominated in two ways: either by presenting a completed Application for Nomination of Candidate form with at least 50 signatures from co-op members in their respective districts or by paying a \$250 filing fee in certified funds.

Bluebonnet's Board is made up of nine directors who serve staggered three-year terms.

Directors represent one of seven districts in Bluebonnet's service area.

There are three seats up for election in 2022: District 1, Caldwell, Guadalupe, Gonzales and Hays counties; District 3, Bastrop County; and District 5, Burleson County.

Candidates must be at least 21 years old, a co-op member in good standing, agree to a background check and meet other qualifications outlined in Bluebonnet's bylaws, which are available at bluebonnet.coop. Hover your cursor over the About tab on the home page, click on Leadership in the drop down

bar and then click on the Becoming a Director link.

Application for Nomination of Candidate forms are available at the co-op's member service centers in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Lockhart and Manor and online at bluebonnet.coop, under the About tab, then Reports & Forms.

All candidate applications by petition or filing fee must be delivered to any Bluebonnet member service center by 4 p.m. Feb. 9, 2022. For more information, call a member service representative at 800-842-7708.

GOVERNMENT YOUTH TOUR, SCHOLARSHIPS

Applications are available for the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, which offers two 11th or 12th graders the opportunity to explore our nation's capital from June 12-21, 2022, and receive a \$1,000 scholarship. The application deadline is Jan. 21, 2022. Bluebonnet will also award 60 \$2,500 scholarships to graduating high school seniors who plan to pursue a higher education. The deadline for those applications is March 4, 2022. Get applications at bluebonnet.coop: click Community, then Scholarships.

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Bluebonnet offices will be closed Dec. 23 and Dec. 24 for the Christmas holiday and Dec. 31 for the New Year's Day holiday. If you have an outage, you can report it by texting OUT to 85700 (to register, text BBOUTAGE to that number), online at bluebonnet.coop, via our mobile app or by calling 800-949-4414. You can pay bills any time online, on our mobile app or by calling 800-842-7708 (press option 2 when prompted).