

RETC Q & A from TCCT Update – Webinars on Dec. 9th & 16th, 2010

TCCT Training Questions

- How do we document that we attended the webinar?

Logging in to the webinar results in a printout used to document attendance.

- Can we get a copy of the webinar presentation?

Yes. The presentation is located on the Solar Professional Page:

http://www.oregon.gov/ENERGY/RENEW/Solar/docs/RETC_Rules_Update.PDF

- If I do a walk-through with an ETO inspector for continued education how do I document that?

Request to have a copy of the ETO inspection form that has the inspector's/installing technician's signature and send that in with your TCCT application when it is time to renew.

- Per Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 330-070-0026 – does this mean my TCCT Certification from May 2010 is good till 2013?

Yes. The TCCT Certification is valid for a three year period. If during the three year timeframe there are changes to the tax credit programs, ODOE may require TCCTs to attend periodic webinars to ensure technicians have up-to-date information.

Also, keep in mind the program is currently scheduled to sunset January 1, 2012. The sunset date may be extended for all or part of RETC at the discretion of the Legislature.

- Is the Solar Thermal TCCT requirement going to include NABCEP Certification?

Yes, as soon as the Solar Thermal NABCEP EL is available it will replace the current ODOE solar thermal exam. Technicians may choose to get the STL limited license in lieu of taking an exam. The Solar Thermal NABCEP EL is scheduled to be out in the fall of 2011.

- Does the TCCT have to be a member of the installing staff of a company or can they be part of the sales/technical design staff as long as they fulfill the requirements?

A TCCT can be an independent person as long as they have met the minimum requirements which are?

- TCCT Application
- Attend TCCT Training
- Meets technical requirements (LRT, NABCEP, STL or ODOE ST Exam)
- Oregon CCB License

- **Do ETO Round Table Meetings count as continued education?**

No

- **Can you be a TCCT without being a technician that has no degree in solar?**

Yes, however you do have to meet the technical requirements. For PV Certification you must obtain a Limited Renewable Technician's License (LRT) or a NABCEP EL Certification. For Solar Thermal you must either obtain a Solar Thermal License (STL) or pass the ODOE Solar Thermal Exam.

- **Would sitting in on the Solar Code Committee meetings be counted toward continuing education?**

No

- **Can we have a clear concise continuing education resource? Where can we get continued education?**

We will work with OSEIA to provide an events calendar that lists qualifying continuing education classes. There will be many qualifying classes offered at the NW Solar Expo in Portland and SolWest in John Day. Other technical classes and trainings may qualify. If you are curious about a specific class or training you can email a description of the class to Rob Del Mar or Angie Whitethorn for determination.

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How is the Credit Calculated

- **Is the current ETO rebate at \$1.50 per watt?**

Energy Trust of Oregon (ETO) provides incentives for customers of Portland General Electric (PGE) and Pacific Power. The ETO rebate for PGE customers is \$1.75 per watt up to \$20,000 and the rebate for Pacific Power customers is \$1.50 per watt up to \$20,000.

Does the average cost per watt vary depending on the size of the system installed?

Yes, the size of the system can affect the installation cost significantly. This in turn can affect the cost per watt.

- **What is the current average cost per watt for PV systems installed in Oregon?**

The average cost for PV systems was \$7.23 per Watt in 2010. So far in 2011 we have received 259 applications with an average cost of \$6.50 per Watt

How does RETC Line up with Other Programs

- **What if I installed a system through the Feed-in Tariff?**

If you chose to do the Feed-in Tariff Program with PGE, Pacific Power or Idaho Power you would not qualify for any state or ETO incentives.

- **Will there be Business Energy Tax Credit application training?**

No. Technicians are needed to assist homeowners with the RETC process. However, there is a need for the department to play a more interactive role with businesses to assist them through the BETC process.

Process

- **Are systems still required to be permanently installed without an option to remove them after a certain period of time?**

There is no specific language detailing a “permanent” installation. PV modules must be secured in a manner that meet local wind loading criteria and that complies with local codes.

- **What if I can only claim \$700 in the first year instead of \$1,500?**

If a customer doesn't have enough tax liability they can roll it forward up to 5 years.

- **Is there a preapproval process to ensure our customers will obtain their tax credit?**

No

- **Will there still be a 5-year wait to install a 2nd PV system?**

All systems installed within the 5-year timeframe are considered one unit and therefore eligible for up to a single \$6,000 credit. The intent of this requirement is to place a limit on the amount of credit and to discourage multiple small installations. Multiple systems are allowed in five year period as long as the sum of the tax credits does not exceed the \$6,000 cap.

- **What about the number of systems installed as it relates annually to the hours?**

A maximum of one credit valued at \$6,000 shall be issued per residence for the year in which it was purchased in annual increments up to \$1,500 over a four-year period. The total credit shall not exceed 50 percent of the cost of the system. All photovoltaic systems installed at a dwelling within a 5 year period shall be considered a single device.

- Will proof of the final inspection be a required submittal with the application?

Yes

RETC Sunset

- Does the RETC end in 2011?

The RETC program is scheduled to sunset January 1, 2012. The Legislature may or may not decide whether some or all of the program should continue past the sunset date.

- Is there a way to extend a RETC beyond 2011?

Only if the legislature acts to extend the sunset date of the RETC program. The law states that the Department of Energy may not issue RETCs after January 1, 2012.

Total Solar Resource Fraction

- Does ODOE audit the installation to verify Total Solar Resource Fraction (TSRF)?

ODOE conducts routine inspections to verify TSRF.

- If the TSRF is 70% does the customer still qualify for a state incentive?

No, the TSRF needs to be at least 75% to qualify.

- Does the 75% TSRF apply to Solar Thermal?

Yes. The 75% TSRF applies to all solar system types.

- Are there any substantial changes to solar water heating?

The TSRF needs to be 75% or better. The TSRF was changed to better reflect what has become an 'industry standard' as well as align with the principle of providing incentives that will encourage trends towards greater energy efficiency.

Which Rules Apply

- When does the state incentive need be claimed?

A customer has up to 3 years to claim their tax credit (the Department of Revenue will only go back 3 years to amend a credit unless they are being audited then they will go back 8 years).

- **What year can the customer take the credit?**

The credit must be claimed for the tax year in which the alternative energy device was purchased if the device is operational by April 1 of the next following year.

- **Does the new 2011 RETC conversion apply to jobs with contracts signed in 2010 (post August 31, 2010)? Would they fall under current net cost/eligibility formula?**

No, their credit will be processed under the set of rules as followed:

- A. Old Rules prior to 8/13/11 - \$3/watt up to \$6,000 no more than 50% of total cost)
- B. Emergency Temporary Rule Change (effective 8/13/10-12/31/10 grandfathered under old rules if a contract was signed by 8/13/10 and received by ODOE by 8/27/10 at 5 pm - \$3/watt up to \$6,000 no more than 50% of net cost (total cost minus utility & federal incentives)
- C. New Permanent Rules (effective 1/1/11 \$3/installed output x 0.7 = \$2.10/w)

- **Does “Net Cost” have a different definition than it did in 2010?**

Yes. In December “Net Cost” was calculated by subtracting utility rebates and the federal tax credit from the system cost. Starting 1/1/11 is no longer required to subtract these costs. The new definition for net cost is the applicant’s cost for the design, acquisition, construction, installation, and permitting. Net cost does not include service contracts, federal incentives, rebates, or refunds.

- **Will the date of the final inspection determine the year the tax credit is claimed in?**

No. The tax year the credit is claimed in depends on the purchase date. The credit must be claimed for the tax year in which the alternative energy device was purchased if the device is operational by April 1 of the next following year.

- **When the old rules changed I was not notified in time but by a few days and lost \$1,500 for the difference of the RETC. Is there any help on getting that back because of the emergency temporary rule changes?**

Unfortunately not – We sent out 3 TCCT mailings (7/14, 7/16 & 7/30) notifying solar folks of the change and extended the deadlines from July 1st to August 13th to have a contract signed and the system installed by 12/31/10.