

LIPA takes a little shine off solar power rebates

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The Long Island Power Authority has begun a two-step reduction in the amount of money it will pay in rebates toward solar energy systems for homes and businesses.

One cut takes place immediately, the other begins in January.

Starting now, LIPA has placed a 50 percent cap on the rebate for the total cost of an installed solar system. The new limit means LIPA will reduce the per-watt rebate on systems costing

less than \$70,000.

Until now, for example, it was possible to receive a total rebate of \$35,000 on a 10-kilowatt system costing \$60,000. From now on, such a system will qualify for a maximum \$30,000 LIPA rebate and for every system costing less than \$70,000, LIPA will rebate either 50 percent of the total cost, or \$3.50 a watt — whichever is less. For systems costing \$70,000 or more, LIPA would still pay 50 percent, or \$3.50 a watt, through its Solar Pioneer Rebate.

From Jan. 1, LIPA will reduce its rebate amount to \$2.75 per

watt from the current \$3.50.

LIPA cited lower solar-panel prices and installation costs, and an increase in the federal tax credit for solar energy systems instituted in January.

Solar installers said the move was expected. "It was just a matter of when, not if," said Sail Van Nostrand, owner of Energy By Choice in Greenlawn and vice chairman of the Long Island Solar Energy Industries Association. He predicted the January cut would slow sales somewhat, but said it would help spread LIPA's \$18 million solar budget

to more customers.

It's the seventh time LIPA has trimmed rebates since starting the program 10 years ago. Since then, it has doled out \$52 million in rebates for more than 2,100 solar systems on Long Island.

Gordian Raacke, a solar proponent at Renewable Energy Long Island, noted a separate New York State-sponsored solar rebate program also was recently reduced. He said the new 50 percent cap would likely have a small impact in the market, but the \$2.75 reduction would have a larger one.