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Solar panels planned for Capitol, gov's residence

By [Thomas Content](#) of the Journal Sentinel
Sept. 14, 2009

A Madison utility will install solar panels on the roof of the State Capitol building, and the state government will pay to install panels on the roof of the garage at the governor's Executive Residence.

Madison Gas & Electric Co. will install solar panels on the roof of the State Capitol, under a solar power demonstration project announced Monday by state Sen. Fred Risser (D-Madison). In a separate project, the state will spend \$34,000 to install solar panels on the roof of the garage at the Executive Residence.

A total of 48 panels will be installed on the West Wing roof of the state Capitol, under a plan approved by the State Capitol and Executive Residence Board, said state Sen. Fred Risser (D-Madison), who chairs the board.

The Capitol's 10-kilowatt system is about twice the size of a solar panel used on a typical home.

MG&E spokesman Steve Kraus said the project is projected to cost about \$60,000 to \$70,000, which is more than the project would cost on the home because of the age, thick walls and unique architecture of the Capitol building. No state funds will be used on the project, Risser said.

Kraus said the utility funds demonstration projects in a variety of areas to gather information about and educate customers about developing renewable energy technologies. Other MG&E [solar demonstration projects](#) include panels used to power bike-path lights, a parking canopy and the Goodman Pool in Madison.

At the Executive Residence, solar panels will power the hot water heater, producing enough energy to provide 120 gallons of hot water for the building on sunny days.

The panels should take care of about 75% of the hot water needs at the governor's residence, and it's expected the state's investment will be paid off in between five and 10 years, Risser said. Funding for the project comes from energy efficiency funding approved in the state capital budget.

It's unclear when that project will begin, but the panels for the Capitol will be completed in November, he said.

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Hang on a second...

The panels at the Governor's Mansion will cost \$34,000. They will supply 75% of the energy needed for hot water. They will supposedly pay for themselves in 5 to 10 years. Let's say 7.5 years and split the difference.

If they provided 100% of the energy needed for hot water, that would mean that, in 7.5 years, we would have to assume that the Governor's Mansion uses \$4,533 per year in hot water. Because they only will provide 75%, are we to assume that that it costs \$5,666 per year to provide hot water to the Governor's Mansion? \$472 per month?

When politicians say things like this, does anyone question them?

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