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HOME SOLAR POWER COMING TO SC

San Francisco-based Sunrun expanding services

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The push for solar power in the Upstate, and across South Carolina, has begun in earnest.

San Francisco-based Sunrun said it is expanding its home solar service to South Carolina and initially will offer solar to homeowners in the Greenville and Spartanburg areas.

Sunrun, which designs, installs, finances, insures, monitors and maintains home solar systems, will offer South Carolina homeowners the option to purchase a solar system or finance it through a third party loan arranged by Sunrun.

Later this summer, Sunrun also will offer a lease through which homeowners can pay a fixed monthly amount to Sunrun, reducing their home electric bill by 20 percent on average.

This year, the company expects to generate at least 50 permanent jobs, ranging from sales consultants to installers to project managers, and plans to open a local office and warehouse facility in Columbia.

"I'm pleased that South Carolina is leading the Southeast in encouraging solar adoption," said Lynn Jurich, Sunrun's chief executive officer. "We look forward to establishing a presence in the Palmetto State and giving residents the choice to power their homes with solar while reducing their electric bills."

With the addition of South Carolina, Sunrun is now available in 15 states. Company officials said the expansion into the state largely is a result of state policymakers' leadership and commitment to make home solar available and affordable for more residents.

In May, conservation groups, along with Duke Energy, the Office of Regulatory staff, which represents the public interest in utility regulation, and other clean energy stakeholders reached a settlement agreement that supporters said will significantly boost solar capacity in Duke's South Carolina service area.

The agreement is designed to spur investments in residential and commercial solar. Duke's service area includes Greenville and Spartanburg.

State lawmakers in the 2014 session passed a bill that Dana Beach, director of the Coastal Conservation League, said radically changed the state's approach to solar energy and established minimum goals for solar deployment.

"We think South Carolina has got a great potential," said Tyson Grinstead, Sunrun's senior manager of public policy in Columbia.