



Photo of house belonging to client considering solar power.



3-D rendering of house with solar installation in place.

Solar

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ists, it is an investment in the future. It's like buying copper 10 years ago, he noted.

Henrico and Hanover counties do not increase real property assessments when solar heating panels are installed on a home, Stanley said, so he expects the market there to increase.

Although Dominion Power has not embraced solar power in a big way, it does allow net metering. This means that if a home solar system generates more electricity than the home is using during prime sunshine hours, the meter needle swings backward, thus deducting electrical usage during the previous night.



Stanley demonstrates equipment for measuring available sunlight.

Solar power has been around a long time and there have been increases in technology and the quality of the materials. As it becomes more popular, solar system costs should go down, Stanley said.

Virginia averages 4.7 hours of direct sunlight a day. A "sunny" place like Phoenix, Ariz. gets about six hours. Germany, where solar power is already very big, due to encouragement by the government, has about 3.5 hours of usable sunlight a day, Stanley noted.

While the engineering behind a solar system is fairly complicated, the installation is fairly simple for a trained contractor. It takes about four to six days, and building permits

are not a problem. A licensed electrician is required to complete the hookup.

Modern solar panels are strong enough to walk on and solar installations have withstood hurricane force winds that blew off a lot of the roofing shingles. Maintenance involves washing them with a hose, Stanley said.

Last week, Stanley was busy estimating

jobs for a house and a veterinarian's clinic in Henrico County.

"There is an interest in solar and I'm there to sell it to them," Stanley said.

To learn more, go to www.shockoesolar.com, or contact Bernie Stanley at (804) 314-4023.