

Business & Industry

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According to the Florida Solar Energy Center (FSEC), a research institute of the University of Central Florida, a swimming pool is second only to our heating and air conditioning. Electric stoves, refrigerators and clothes dryers don't even come close. The pump that filters your swimming pool is responsible for 20% of your monthly electric bill. However, what if you could reduce that percentage to zero?

I did the math: A saving of 5000 kilowatt hours (kWh) per year for small pools and up to 7000 kWh (or more) for larger pools. With TECO's current rates, *not* paying to run your pool pump means an annual dollar savings of \$650 – \$950 per year, and with the anticipated rate increases reported by The Tribune, FOX News and others, the savings for owners of medium to large pools would increase to *over* \$1,230 per year as early as next May.

"What's the catch? How does one save that much electricity without a huge windmill or two? Even if a health enthusiast modified a treadmill to run backwards, a whole track team running all day couldn't generate enough electricity to run a pool pump! (For some reason I think of stuff like that.)

Anyway, there's no catch. Being a "techie", but tight with a buck, I checked out a *very* interesting solution created by Jeff Oglesby of Sun Ray Engineering, headquartered in Valrico. Like the Free Hot Water system described elsewhere on these pages, the system sounded too good to be true, but it works! Sun Ray can install a small array of photovoltaic solar panels on your roof, (see photo to the right) and connect them to their new high efficiency DC-powered pump, plumbing it "parallel" to your existing swimming pool pump. That means you can still use your old pump should you ever want to. However, with the new pump, there are no electrical connections to your house wiring at all. The solar panels generate all the electricity needed, and your pool filter will automatically operate about 10-11 hours a day, without using one watt from TECO. In fact, if you want, you can disconnect your old pool pump, or as I do, just *leave* it turned off.

And, since you're filtering your pool longer than usual

each day, you can reduce the use of pool chemicals; another significant savings.

Wait: It's *solar* powered you say. What about cloudy days? I wondered about that too, *but, even* though the pump runs slower when it's cloudy, it runs *longer*. (Apparently due to the scattered light, the system comes on earlier and runs later), so it still gets the job done. Batteries? you ask. It don't need no stinkin batteries! Thus, none to keep charged.

John Burkett, a civil engineer living in Orlando, praised the Sun Ray installation at his house: "I love it. It's like having my own electric company. That quiet little pump circulates 26,000 gallons of water in about six hours... for free, saving me about \$70 *every* month. I'd like to see *every* home in Florida have one of these".

Lastly, since there's an obvious fuel savings for our *planet*, for the

time being at least, as a "green" incentive, there's no sales tax on the Sun Ray hardware or installation, and until January a tax credit from the federal government gives us 30% back.

Right now, Oglesby is essentially concentrating on the South-Central Florida market, but has shipped the systems as far as Hawaii and St. Croix.

For further information contact Sun Ray Engineering at (813) 643-9230, or (866) 508-8385.



Three photovoltaic solar panels generate enough free electricity to run homeowners' swimming pool filters from sunup to sundown, saving hundreds of dollars per year.