



# Solar heat for the pool

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Rising oil and natural gas prices as well as a utility company rebate have helped Sunshine Solar Technologies, which doubled its business of installing solar pool-heating systems over the past year. Now, tough new energy standards adopted by the Town of Southampton might play a role in grooming new customers for the Jericho-based company and similar businesses.

The town's updated regulations will require new heated swimming pools to use solar energy to warm the water. Homeowners replacing heating equipment will have to purchase a solar heating system as well.

While it's difficult to gauge the direct impact on demand for these systems, Sunshine's vice president, Win Hayes, said it will raise awareness and create more opportunity in an area with an estimated 110,000 pools.

"I can't quantify what the impact on demand will be," Hayes said. "We think it will cause other towns with high pool densities to look at incentives and regulations to increase the use of solar pool heating."

Sunshine Solar Technologies has installed about 700 solar pool-heating systems in the past five years. On Long Island the company expects to install 220 systems this year. Hayes attributes much of the company's growth this year to rising oil and natural gas prices as well as National Grid's 15 percent rebate on the costs to replace a natural gas pool heater with a solar heating system, he said. The rebate runs until the end of the year, he added.

Hayes figures that heating a pool to maintain a temperature of 83 to 85 degrees with a natural gas heater from mid-May to mid-September totals \$3,000. Installing Sunshine Solar Technologies' system would cost about \$5,000, or more depending on the size of the pool, he said. The equipment has a 12-year warranty



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Win Hayes, left, vice president of Sunshine Solar Technologies of Jericho, installed a pool heating system for Southampton homeowner David Funt, right, that uses solar energy collectors on the roof, below.



on parts and labor, he noted, adding that the system would pay for itself in savings after two to three years.

The system typically involves solar collectors placed on an unshaded roof or a rack on the ground. The pool pump sends water through tubes to the solar

panels and then back to the pool.

Hayes said the new requirement is a step in the right direction. "It's going to create awareness and even more so among pool builders," he said. "A lot more guys will educate themselves on it and want to offer it as a product to their customers."