

HECO adds new fee to bills, starting this month

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Hawaiian Electric Co. customers will see a new charge on their electric bills this month that will be used to help finance clean energy installations for low-income residents.

The new charge — labeled the "Green Infrastructure Fee" — will be used to finance the state's Green Energy Market Securitization, or GEMS, program.

The GEMS program is designed to help customers who cannot afford the upfront costs, or cannot qualify for other financing, to obtain "green infrastructure improvements," such as rooftop photovoltaic.

For a typical residential customer using 600 kilowatt hours a month, the Green Infrastructure Fee will be \$1.29 per month.

Customers will see little net change on their bills because the new charge is combined with a reduction of the Public Benefits Fund surcharge, said the utility in a press release.

The Public Benefits Funds surcharge is used to pay for the state's conservation and energy efficiency programs, such as Hawaii Energy.

The Green Infrastructure Fee will appear under the listing of "Current Charges: Electric Service" on all Hawaiian Electric, Maui Electric, and Hawaii Electric Light bills. The program is part of the state's push for 70 percent clean energy by 2030. Hawaii's solar capacity increased 58 percent last year to 341 megawatts, according to a study released in August by the Environment America Research & Policy Center. The study ranked Hawaii second in the nation for solar installations per capita.