

Digital Meters



Allamakee-Clayton Electric is investing in digital meters or Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) to improve the efficiency and reliability of our electric system. These meters

communicate with the utility without the need of someone coming to your home to log the electricity usage. Many members have asked questions about these meters and how they work. Here are the most common questions we have received – and the answers.

Q: Why are we changing to the digital meters?

A: The AMI meter upgrade provides our members with numerous benefits. In addition to providing additional rate options to our members, the AMI meters allow our customer service representatives to access meter information from the office and obtain meter reading information almost instantaneously. AMI meters will also enhance outage call information to pinpoint the location of outages more quickly.

Our members will be happy to hear that we can troubleshoot high-usage problems by providing information about power consumption, outage and blink count history and voltage information. Finally, the AMI meters will provide us with power usage readings on an hourly basis instead of only daily which will help us to better manage the electric system.

Q: How does my new AMI meter work?

A: As with the formerly installed meters, we can read the meter remotely from our central office. The difference is that these meters transmit their data using low power radio frequency (RF) as opposed to sending the readings over the power lines. The meter only relays information related to

energy usage and power quality such as voltage or outages and takes a few minutes throughout the day to transmit the information.

Q: Are there any potential health impacts from a meter that can receive and send data?

A: No. Research conducted by the Electric Power Research Institute, the Utilities Telecom Council, the Federal Communications Commission and others has revealed no health impacts from digital meters. The power emitted by digital meters falls well below the maximum recommended in federal guidelines. Contrary to some misconceptions, the new meters emit RF only when communicating. Compare this with other commonly used electronic devices. A digital meter has an RF density hundreds of times less than the RF density of a cell phone – and the meters are installed on the outside of your house not next to your ear! See Figure 1.

Q: What information does the new meter record?

A: The meter records a kWh reading, date and time of energy usage, overall peak demand of the electric account and the number of times the meter has experienced a loss of power for any reason. In fact, the meter will record the

date and time of light blinks and the length of the power outage. Once your new digital meter is installed, we will be able to tell if someone tampers with your meter because the meter will report any tampering attempts to the Cooperative.

Q: Is there a choice whether or not my home receives an AMI meter?

A: Yes. Contact the Cooperative.

Q: When will my meter be installed?

A: We are completing installations on a regional basis and expect to complete the changeout program over the next 2-3 years.

Q: Who will be changing out the meters?

A: Allamakee-Clayton Electric employees, or contractors with co-op identification, will be completing the meter change out.

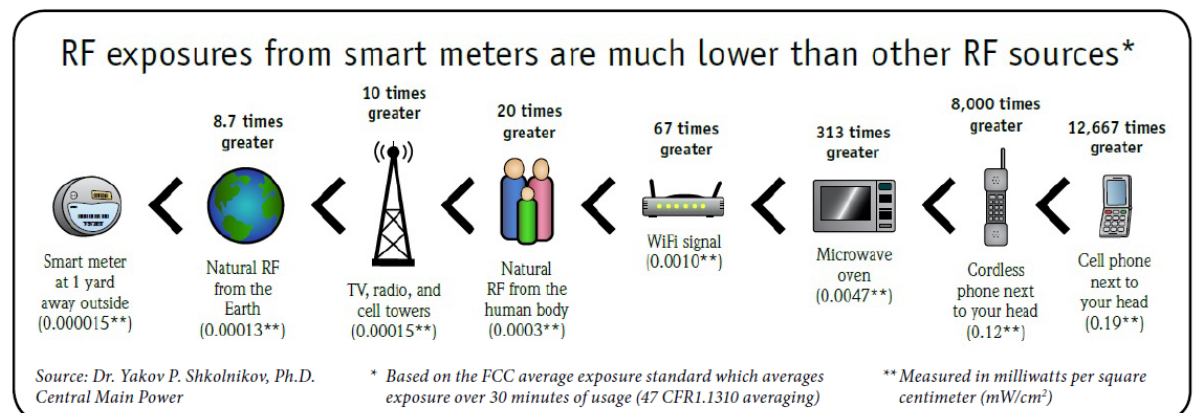
Q: Will the Co-op notify me prior to installation?

A: No. Installation of new meters will be done when we have employees or contractors in your area. Installers will leave a doorhanger after the new meter is installed.

Q: Will I lose electrical service during the installation?

A: You may possibly lose service for a few minutes. You may need to reset electronic clocks and other devices.

FIGURE 1



Q: How will I know if my meter has been changed?

A: Installers will leave a door hanger after the new meter is installed and it will be identified in the next month's bill statement. We will work with businesses to minimize any inconvenience. You do not have to be present during the meter change.

Q: Will it cost me to have my AMI meter installed?

A: There will be no additional cost to the member to install the new system. There is no rate increase anticipated in association with this project.

Q: What if my bill reports more kWh usage than normal or I think my meter is not working correctly?

A: Contact us immediately to discuss your billing concerns. All new meters have been tested and meet American National Standards Institute regulations. Energy use information is also displayed on the face of the meter. If the meter has no display, contact the Cooperative right away.

Q: What day of the month will the meters be read?

A: All of ACEC's new meters can be read at a variety of times to obtain a history of account information. However, for billing purposes meters will continue to be read on monthly schedules.

Q: Once co-op employees no longer need to read the meter, can obstacles be constructed that may make the meter inaccessible?

A: No. Reasonable access to equipment still must be maintained. This allows for ACEC employees to either read or maintain the meter if necessary at reasonable times.

Q: Will the Co-op continue to perform service inspections?

A: Routine inspections of all meters and services will continue in order to look for safety hazards, theft

or other problems.

Q: How secure will the new meters be?

A: The meter display is visible for members to be able to check their consumption. All other information and data stored in the meter is secure and the meter is sealed. Meter manufacturers have incorporated security features and encryption technology into their meters, as recommended by national security experts. Our goal is to upgrade our electric distribution system to make it safer, more secure, and more reliable. Your new digital meter is part of this effort.

Q: Can the Cooperative remotely disconnect electric service using the new meters?

A: No. Disconnecting the service requires that an employee travel to the location to disconnect the service.

Q: Will the new meter notify the Co-op when the power goes out?

A: The meters will be able to record outages allowing the Cooperative to verify whether the outage is either on the member's side of the meter or the Co-op's side. We would, however, appreciate that you still notify the Cooperative if your power goes out.

Questions?

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