

Automated Meter Reading Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is advanced metering infrastructure (AMI)?

A. Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) refers to systems that measure, collect and analyze energy use, and interact with advanced devices such as electricity meters, through various communication media.

Q: What is automated meter reading (AMR)?

A: Automated meter reading (AMR) systems are one part of the overall AMI system and use a digital meter to send meter reading data over power lines, eliminating the need to read meters manually.

Q: Why is Coast Electric installing AMR?

A: The main benefit is that it saves money, which helps keep our electric rates low. It also saves labor and fuel, and cuts vehicle emissions by eliminating the use of meter reading vehicles.

Other benefits include more efficient power outage response and easier diagnosis of high energy bills. As we enhance the system, more benefits will become available.

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Q: When will AMR happen?

A: The project began as a pilot program in 2010 with the first meter and substation equipment installations. We will continue to install meters at homes and businesses throughout 2011 and 2012.

Q: Who will be changing the meters?

A: In order to save our members money, we will use in-house Coast Electric employees to install the meters.

Q: Will I need to upgrade my meter base?

A: Probably not. The new AMR meters fit right into the same meter base as your current meter. But, if our AMR installers discover your meter base is broken or needs maintenance, you'll need to call a licensed electrician to fix the problem. The meter base at your home or business is part of your electrical system, just like the breaker panel or wiring inside the walls. Coast Electric's service rules require member-owners to provide a suitable meter base and keep it in good working order as a condition of receiving electric service from the cooperative.

Q: Do I have a choice in getting an AMR meter?

A: No. AMR meters will be installed on all accounts.

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Q: How much is AMR going to cost member-owners?

A: There will be no additional cost to the member-owner to install the AMR system.

Q: What's the difference between the new AMR meter and an old meter?

A: The new AMR meters are electronic and the majority of our old meters are mechanical. The new meters will still display the meter reading, but it will be in a digital LED form. The biggest difference is that the new meters have an electronic AMR module installed.

The AMR module can record and deliver electricity consumption data and send it over power lines to equipment located in our substations. From the substation, the data is sent to our billing system computer, located in the Kiln headquarters office.

Q: What information does the AMR meter record?

A: The AMR meter records electric use and power interruption data.

Q: Is my privacy protected?

A: The data from new digital meters helps us serve our members better. Our goals in installing new meters are to deliver better service, control rising operating expenses, improve system reliability through improved outage management and preventive maintenance, and provide our members with information they can use to make informed decisions about energy use. Coast Electric does not sell its members' data to any third party and abides by stringent policies protecting the privacy and security of data about your electric use. Coast Electric is committed to protecting the privacy and security of our members' personal information. There are no cameras on the meter and we are not controlling any appliances, and we cannot see which appliances are being used in your home or business.

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Q: Are there dangers or health risks in transmitting information from the meter to Coast Electric?

A: The data from the new meters will be sent back to the co-op office over the power lines. Using the power lines for data transmission means that the meters will only emit a negligible amount of radio frequency (RF), about the same amount as a digital alarm clock.

You should know that we are all continuously exposed to very low levels of both natural and man-made RF fields. Even the earth's surface and the human body are constant sources of RF fields. Inside your own home you will likely find numerous items that emit RF fields including microwave ovens, cell phones, cordless phones, televisions, Wi-Fi signals, antennas and receivers as well as lighting.

Your cooperative is a not-for-profit private business that is solely owned and operated by the members who receive electric service from our company. When our board of directors approves a policy or procedure for the use of new equipment and technologies, they do so knowing that it will also apply to their own homes. In using this type of metering system, we have not only deemed it to be a wise and safe choice for all co-op members and their families but our own families as well.

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

A: The AMR meters will actually record electric use daily. Your billing date will remain the same as it is now. Once the AMI system is fully implemented, additional services will be available for member use, such as the ability for members to view their energy usage over the internet.

Q: If I am on a Time of Use rate, will my meter be changed?

A: Yes, all meters will be changed to the new AMI meter.

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Q: Will someone other than Coast Electric be able to read AMR meters electronically?

A: No. The computer runs software especially written for the AMR system. The substation communications equipment must be set up by model and serial number and each meter must be added to the computer by its serial number and substation. Someone using a home computer will not be able to read an AMR meter. Also, other electric companies with AMR systems will not be able to read Coast Electric meters.

Q: Will Coast Electric still do meter inspections?

A: Routine inspections of meters will continue so we can spot safety hazards, maintenance issues, theft or other problems.

Q: Will the AMR meter notify Coast Electric when the power goes out?

A: Yes, but we still recommend that you report any disruption of service, 1-877-769-2372

Q: Can Coast Electric disconnect my power using the AMR meter?

A: Yes, in some cases Coast Electric will install special devices that will allow for remote disconnection.

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Q: What benefits does the AMR system provide?

A: Here are the top reasons why AMR is a good move for Coast Electric and members:

Saves money.

Reduces visits to your home/property.

Reduces the potential for misreads and data entry errors.

Reduces estimated bills because of locked gates, bad dogs, etc.

Provides easy, quick, inexpensive meter re-reads.

Enhances accuracy of electric bills.

Contributes to more efficient outage restoration.

Enables extensive data gathering for troubleshooting service problems.

Enables data gathering on energy use to help spot high bill causes.

Quickly spots meter tampering and energy theft.

Allows for additional member services in the future.