

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS About Smart Meters and AMI



OVERVIEW

What is AMI?

Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) is a meter-reading system that allows two-way communication between smart meters and electricity providers.

Why is ECI REC switching to AMI smart meters?

The AMI system supports our goal of making the electric distribution system safer and more reliable. With smart meter technology, ECI REC will be able to read meters remotely from the office. As a result, we will no longer have to hire a contractor or send out line crews to gather readings, which will result in a cost savings of approximately \$175,000 per year and lower our carbon footprint.

What do smart meters do?

For each account, smart meters record the kWh reading, the date and time of energy usage, and overall peak demand. They also record the date and time of light blinks, the length of power outages, and whether they have rotated backwards or been tampered with.

How do smart meters collect and transmit data?

Smart meters collect and store energy usage data. This data is sent to ECI REC through a radio frequency (RF) network. Once the data has been transmitted and validated, it will be made available on the member portal, SmartHub.

Will my smart meter automatically notifies ECI REC when my power goes out?

While your smart meter may help us verify the root of the problem, it will not immediately notify the Cooperative when an outage occurs. When you have an outage or emergency, you should always call us at 877-850-4343.

Can members choose not to receive a new meter?

No. This is a system-wide upgrade program, and all residential and commercial meters will be changed out. Smart meters are an industry standard, serving more than fifty percent of U.S. households.

COST AND BILLING

How much will the AMI system cost ECI REC members?

There will be no additional costs to our members, and no rate change is anticipated in association with the project. If a rate change is required, we believe the long-term membership benefits will offset it.

When will my meter be read?

For billing purposes meters will be read at midnight on the last day of the month and the monthly billing cycle will remain the same. Bills will be mailed around the tenth day of each month and are due on the first day of the next month.

What do I do if I think my bill is reporting more kWh usage than normal, or I think my meter is not working correctly?

Contact ECI REC right away to discuss billing concerns. Smart meters are more accurate than analog or mechanical meters. The new meters have been tested and meet American National Standards Institute (ANSI) regulations and conform to all applicable standards and regulations set forth by the Iowa Utilities Board.

INSTALLATION

Who will change out the meters?

Chapman Metering will perform all meter changes.



When and where will the smart meter installation begin?

ECI REC has an installation schedule in place for all areas of its distribution system. The first meters will be changed in first quarter of 2018, with an estimated completion in fourth quarter of 2018—pending weather, adequate staffing, and inventory supply.

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Will ECI REC notify me prior to installation?

ECI REC will send out postcards prior to the meter installations. Smart meter deployment maps and information will be available on ECI REC's website.

Do I need to be present during the meter change?

No.

How will I know if my meter has been changed?

Chapman Metering will leave a door hanger behind indicating your smart meter was installed.

Will my electric service be interrupted during the meter change?

Chapman Metering personnel will try to provide warning before performing the change. You may experience a short disruption to your electrical service during the meter change.

What if I have a separate heat meter?

You will also receive a new smart meter for your heat meter, and your Heat Plus rate will continue.

SECURITY

Can anyone other than ECI REC read the new meters?

The manufacturer has incorporated security features and encryption technology into the meter. While the meter display is visible so members can check their consumption, the meters are sealed and the information and data stored within them can only be accessed with special software. Though these measures make it highly unlikely, the smart meters report any tampering attempts to the Cooperative within seconds.

Can ECI REC disconnect power using the smart meter technology?

Some single-phase residential meters will have a disconnect switch that is capable of remotely disconnecting the service. This switch may be used for member-requested disconnects and safety measures. For example, a meter may be disconnected if there is danger from a fire in the area or a downed line.

Could the new meters impact my health?

To safeguard the health of the public, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) establishes requirements for acceptable RF exposure limits. Smart meters comply with and exceed these requirements, as well as global international requirements. Because of their outdoor installation and infrequent signal transmission, Smart meters also present significantly lower RF exposure than many other products used daily by consumers without concern, such as cell phones and wireless routers.

Will the AMI service interfere with my radio, telephone, cell phone, computer, television, wireless internet access, invisible fence, or other electronic equipment?

No. The transmitting device operates in compliance with FCC regulations to avoid interference with other electronic devices. The AMI system only operates for short periods of time each day at a low power frequency.