Digging Into Health and Security
MYTHS AND FACTS

BUILDING A SMARTER COOPERATIVE

By installing smart meters, ECI REC is able to operate more efficiently and make sure your rates are calculated as fairly and accurately as possible. The meters record daily usage data for each member account, which empowers you to make informed choices about how and when you use electricity.

But, as is the case with any new technology, there are a few misconceptions about smart meters—especially when it comes to public health and security. We address the four most commonly circulated smart meter myths below to help you separate the myths from the facts.

MYTH 1: Smart meters are dangerous to my health because they communicate using wireless signals.

FACT: Smart meters do transmit data via radio frequencies (RF). However, research by the World Health Organization (WHO) has found that the tiny amount of RF energy produced by smart meters—which is well below the limit set by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)—isn't harmful to human health.

To put it in perspective, smart meters emit significantly less RF than other devices consumers use every day, like cell phones, satellite TVs, wireless routers, baby monitors, and microwaves. In fact, it's estimated you would have to be exposed to the daily RF emitted by a smart meter for almost 400 years to get a dose equivalent to one year of 15 minutes of daily cell phone use.

MYTH 2: Smart meters are an invasion of privacy.

FACT: Smart meters measure how much energy you use over the course of the day, but not how you use that energy. In other words, they cannot tell if you're using your microwave, your air conditioner, or your cell phone charger; just that you're using energy.

In addition, ECI REC follows the strict policies set by the State of Iowa that regulate the use of personal information for business actions like billing and customer service. We are committed to protecting your privacy and security.

MYTH 3: Smart meters do not keep consumer data secure.

FACT: Security features and encryption technology are built into your smart meter. While the meter display is visible so you can check your consumption, the meters are sealed and the information and data stored within can only be accessed with special software. While it is highly unlikely, if a highly sophisticated "bad actor" were to break into the encrypted system, the smart meters would alert the Cooperative within seconds, allowing us to jump into action and lock down your data.

MYTH 4: Smart meters increase the risk of fire and explosion.

FACT: Every smart meter must meet the safety requirements and standards set by the National Electric Safety Code (NESC). Specifically, each manufacturer must get independent certification proving their meters are safe and resistant to heat, fire, voltages, surges, and self-heating. We know the smart meters we use have passed this rigorous certification process.

At the end of the day, smart meters are the key to unlocking the smart grid, which is already reducing the operations and management costs of electric cooperatives and utilities across the country. However, switching from analog to smart meters is a big transition. So, if you still have questions about the safety and security of smart meter installation, the ECI REC team is here to answer them. Please call or email us for more information.