



# Smart Meter Q&A



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## ARE SMART METERS REQUIRED IN PENNSYLVANIA?

Yes. Pennsylvania's Act 129 of 2008 requires the state's seven largest electric distribution companies (EDCs) to develop energy efficiency and conservation (EE&C) plans and adopt other methods of reducing electricity used by customers – including the use of smart meters by their customers. The EDCs impacted by Act 129 are Duquesne Light; Met-Ed; Penn Power; PECO Energy; Penelec; PPL Electric Utilities; and West Penn Power.

The Public Utility Commission (PUC) is charged with implementing Act 129 and helping consumers and electric utilities reduce energy consumption, especially at peak times during the day. Smart meters are being installed in new construction and at individual customers' request, with the goal of all customers utilizing smart meters by 2023.

## WHAT IS A SMART METER?

A smart meter is an advanced meter that measures electric usage more often than conventional meters and sends that information more quickly to the customer and the EDC. Through two-way communication, smart meters also can monitor the electric distribution system to ensure it is functioning properly.

Smart meters have the following basic functions: measure the electricity used; with customer consent, remotely coordinate electricity consumption; and interface with EDCs to identify outages and provide real-time visibility into the operational status of an electrical distribution system.

## HOW WILL I BENEFIT FROM THE USE OF A SMART METER?

- Smart meters can help your utility restore your service faster during power outages.
- Smart meters can help you better understand how much electricity you are using throughout the day.
- Smart meters can reduce meter-reading costs and help detect theft of electricity.

## HOW COULD A SMART METER HELP ME SAVE ON MY ELECTRIC BILL?

Customers on time-of-use rate plans can use the information from smart meters to shift their usage to different times of the day when electricity costs less to produce. By using electricity more efficiently, customers can realize savings on their electric bills. For example, rather than running the dishwasher right after dinner when electric prices are higher, customers can wait until later in the evening to run the dishwasher.

## IS THERE CURRENTLY A SMART METER CHARGE ON MY BILL?

Yes. The charge will be included as a separate line item or in your electric utility's base rate. You can confirm that information by contacting your utility. This charge covers the costs of assessing and deploying smart meter technology in accordance with Act 129. Under the law, utilities may begin assessing the surcharge for the work being done prior to actual installation of the meter. This charge applies to all customers.

## HOW LONG WILL I PAY FOR THE SMART METER SURCHARGE THAT APPEARS ON MY BILL?

This surcharge is reviewed and approved by the PUC annually, and is subject to change. While there is no definitive timeframe to date, the surcharge is expected to remain on customers' bills as utilities work to achieve full smart meter deployment by 2023.

## CAN I OPT OUT OF THE CHARGE IF I DON'T WANT A SMART METER?

No. State law does not allow a customer to "opt out" of their EDC's smart meter program or surcharge. Installation of a smart meter is a condition of service to more accurately reflect rates and usage, and will ensure no disruption to your service. Questions concerning the process or timetable for the installation of your metering equipment should be directed to your electric utility.

## WHEN WILL I HAVE MY SMART METER?

Smart meters must be installed no later than 2023 for customers of the seven EDCs covered under the law. Customers who want the technology sooner may ask the EDC to install it. The customer must pay a fee for the early installation. That fee may be as little as \$17. Contact your electric utility for more information.

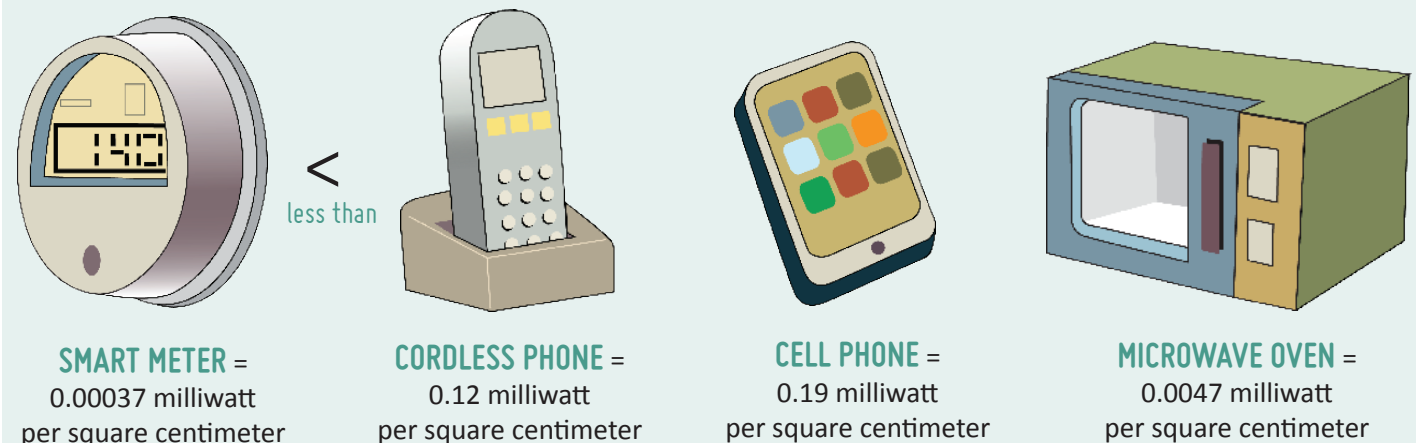
## WILL MY SMART METER INFORMATION BE SECURE?

Smart meter communication network is a high-security environment that employs layers of protection from unwanted and unlawful access. Pennsylvania regulations restrict access to customer information, and do not permit an electric company or electric supplier to release private customer information to a third party without customer consent.

## HOW DOES A SMART METER WORK?

Smart meter communications can happen over the power lines or by radio frequency (RF), just like many other devices in your home. According to a study by the California Council of Science and Technology, wireless smart meters, when installed and properly maintained, result in much smaller levels of RF exposure than many existing common household electronic devices.

### UNDERSTANDING RADIO FREQUENCIES (RF) AND SMART METERS



(Resource FCC's Standard average based on 30 minutes of exposure)

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT YOUR UTILITY OR THE PUC:

### Write

PA Public Utility Commission  
Bureau of Consumer Services  
P.O. Box 3265  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

### Call

1-800-692-7380  
For people with speech or hearing loss,  
dial 7-1-1 (Telecommunications Relay  
Service)

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[www.puc.pa.gov](http://www.puc.pa.gov)

