

Washington Electric Co-op Advanced Meter Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is an advanced meter?

An advanced meter is a digital meter that replaces the electric meter currently on your home or business. The meter is one component of a system, connecting the meter to the substation and back to the Co-op office in East Montpelier. The advanced meter can tell the Co-op instantly if the power is off, allowing for faster restoration of power.

2. What are the benefits of advanced meters?

The advanced meter will allow members secure access to more detail about your electricity usage. Members may choose to use this data to manage how much and when you use electricity, controlling your costs more closely. Better member electric information enables better decisions and can lead to reduced electricity use and potentially save you money.

Other benefits of advanced meters include:

- Automated outage detection and notification. While WEC will still want members to call when the power goes out, advanced meters will allow us to know the location and extent of the outage far more quickly than before.
- Continuous reporting of power quality levels at the meter to improve reliability and detection when there are conditions which result in power quality disturbances, such as low voltage or “blinks”.
- When a member wants to be able to remotely control various appliances within her home, such as heating/cooling/lighting, such remote control would be possible through a Home Area Network (HAN). The HAN will communicate wirelessly from inside the home, to the advanced meter. No advanced meters will be installed with this capability, unless the member authorizes this in writing.

3. When will the co-op install the meters?

WEC’s employees will replace all meters by the end of 2012. In advance of replacing your meter, you will receive written and phone notification. The new meter is the same size as your current meter, and will be placed in the same spot. The replacement will take less than 15 minutes and there will be no need to gain access to your home or to turn off your power for an extended period.

4. What is the technology used in advanced meters?

There are two kinds of advanced meters. “Hard wired” meters transmit information over existing power lines, called “power line carrier” or PLC. WEC is installing only PLC meters.

“Wireless” or radio frequency (RF) meters transmit information via radio signals, using a technology similar to that used in cordless phone and baby monitors. WEC is not installing any RF meters.

5. Will our privacy be protected?

WEC has policy and practices to protect member information. As a regulated electric utility our policy and practice must meet regulations of both state and federal agencies. As a member-owned cooperative WEC is committed to not divulging ANY member data to another member, company, agency or other party contractor, without express written consent from you.

The advanced meter will measure the same thing that is measured by your current meter – your overall electricity consumption. Because the advanced meters will allow two way communication over the power line, any member with internet access then will have the ability to securely monitor and better understand their electric usage and cost, in addition to already being able to receive bills and make payments electronically.

6. What if I don’t want ALL that data, whatever my reason may be?

Members will have secure access to their hourly electric usage data, in near real time. “Member choice” provides both complete data access, and allows you and the Co-op to identify usage conditions that you may then want to be able to better understand or change. WEC expects most members will come to value this level of detail, and the ability for better management of one’s usage.

WEC will provide a limited access option, for members who choose to not receive or be able to access hourly data. We call this “Monthly Limited Choice”, available without additional charge. The member will need to affirmatively sign an agreement, which can be rescinded at any time by the member. Members who sign up for “Monthly Limited Choice” will have full member rights and obligations, but will not have access to their own data, except for a single monthly kilowatthour (kwh) total use reading; in addition there may be other services or benefits which may be unavailable to members who sign up for “Monthly Limited Choice”.