

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, as part of the Co-op's system wide upgrades through its 4 year Construction Work Plan. 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 goes 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:

- Automatic outage detection and notification. For a rural utility such as WEC, the ability to determine cause(s) of outages has historically been constrained by WEC having to rely on members calling us, and letting us know of an outage. With advanced meters, WEC members may still be called during an outage, but our ability to diagnose cause(s) and then get our linemen to the location where the damage will be greatly enhanced.
- Continuous reporting of power quality levels at the meter to improve reliability; because the advanced meter allows much more detail of issues, whether within a member's home or on the Co-op's distribution lines, when there are conditions which result in power quality disturbances, WEC will be able to diagnose and remedy those causes, much faster.
- 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, if installed by the member, would communicate wirelessly (RF) from inside the home, to the advanced meter. All advanced meters are technically capable of communicating with a HAN, but no advanced meters will be installed with that capability enabled, 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 multiple 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. Most members already understand being a member-owned utility already provides a level of security because we are governed by members, elected by members. WEC's policy includes a commitment to not divulge ANY member data to another member, party, company, agency or third 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, and then to the internet, with a member's secure access to her data, any member with internet access then will have the ability to monitor and better understand their electric usage and cost, in addition to already being able to receive bills and make payments electronically.