

Frequently Asked Questions about AMI

What is AMI?

AMI is the acronym for Advanced Metering Infrastructure. AMI is a method of using communications technology to transmit meter data to a central location.

How does AMI work?

The AMI meter transmits data via power lines to the substation. The data then travels by radio from the substation to the cooperative office.

Why is PPCS installing an AMI system?

The AMI system will enhance member service, improve electric service and service reliability, and improve day-to-day operating efficiencies.

When and where will deployment of the AMI system begin?

The first phase of the three-year deployment of the AMI will begin in mid-April 2009. PPCS' ten substations will be upgraded first with the necessary equipment. Over the next three years, new digital meters will be installed at all homes and businesses powered by PPCS.

Where will the AMI meter exchange process begin?

The first exchange of new meters will be for members served by the Ella and Lund substations. About 2,000 new meters will be installed for members in the following townships:

- Pierce County: El Paso, Maiden Rock, Rock Elm, Union
- Pepin County: Durand, Frankfort, Pepin, Stockholm, Waterville, Waubeek
- Buffalo County: Maxville

Who will be changing out the meters?

Chapman Metering, a contractor for PPCS, will be doing the majority of the meter exchanges. However, some meter exchanges will be done by PPCS personnel. Contractor vehicles will bear a PPCS magnetic sign. PPCS door hangers will be left when the meter exchange is complete indicating that the member has a new electric meter.

Do members need to be home for the conversion?

If the meter was installed inside the home or a building being served electricity, the member must be home or other arrangements made in advance. Members do not need to be home if the meter is on the outside of the home or a building.

Will members be contacted in advance of the meter exchanges?

Yes, members will be notified by mail prior to the meter exchange; and again by phone about seven days before the exchange is to be completed.

Will power be interrupted to install the AMI meter?

Yes. There will be a momentary interruption in electric service. PPCS or its contractor will provide advance warning to members by knocking on the door of the home before exchanging the meter. In some situations, problems with member-owned equipment may result in a longer disruption of service for repairs. After the meter exchange, all electronic clocks and timers may be blinking and will need to be reset. We understand this is an annoyance and apologize for the inconvenience.

What is the difference between the AMI meter and previous meter?

The AMI meters are digital electronic devices, while your previous meter may have been an electro-mechanical device. The AMI meters will continue to display the meter reading, but it is in a digital LED format. The key difference is on the inside of the meter. The new meters contain an electronic circuit board module. The module receives and stores the kilowatt-hour consumption recorded by the electronics in the meter. It is able to transmit this and other data over the power lines to equipment located in PPCS' substation, which then communicates the information to the cooperative office.

What about those who have a separate off-peak meter for load management?

The off-peak meter will be exchanged for an AMI meter. Members will continue to have their specific electric loads controlled and receive the lower off-peak electric rates.

What information does the AMI meter record?

The new meter records an electronic kilowatt-hour reading, the overall peak demand of the electric account, the date and time of energy usage, if there is a loss of power for any reason, including blinks, how long the power was off and when the power was restored.

When will the AMI system start reading the meters?

In 2009, with completion of the first phase of the AMI deployment, most members served by the Ella and Lund substations will be first to have their meters read by the AMI system. However, PPCS will continue to read meters manually until all equipment has been tested and we are confident that the system is working properly. This process will continue in years two and three as meter exchanges are completed and each substation becomes operational with the AMI system.

If no one has to read the meter, does it still need to be accessible?

Yes. PPCS requires that reasonable access to equipment still must be maintained.

On what day of the month will the meters be read?

The new meters can be read by PPCS at any time to obtain a history of account information. For billing purposes, your monthly billing cycle will remain the same at this time.

Will PPCS continue to do service inspections of meters?

Yes. Routine inspections of all meters and services will continue to ensure meters are in proper working condition and to look for safety hazards, theft or other problems. However, if you suspect your meter may not be working properly, call PPCS immediately.

How secure is the AMI meter?

The meter display is visible for you to see so you can check your consumption. All other information and data stored in the meter is secure and the meter is sealed.

Can the cooperative disconnect power using the AMI system?

Yes, with the addition of a separate disconnect collar, the meters do have remote disconnect and reconnect capabilities.

Will the meter notify PPCS when the power goes out?

Yes. The meter will send a signal to the cooperative indicating a power outage. However, since it takes time for the AMI system to report the outage back to the cooperative office, we recommend that you continue to call to report an outage.

What if my bill reports more kWh usage than normal or if I think my new meter is not working properly?

Contact PPCS at 1-800-924-2133 as soon as possible to discuss your billing concerns.