

PG&E to bring Smartmeters to area Technology promises greater customer savings

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"April is the month the Pacific Gas & Electric Co. is bringing the new SmartMeter technology to Plumas and Lassen counties," said Paul Moreno, senior media relations representative.

He anticipates the process of exchanging local meters will begin the second week of April.

"Customers should expect a letter from PG&E and that letter will explain meters are being upgraded," Moreno said.

He said Wilmington Energy Inc., of Pennsylvania, would be the meter contractor. As the installer they will choose the starting community.

"Over the next few months they will be deploying meters in Plumas County. The installers will carry both Wilmington and PG&E identification," Moreno added.

He said in the exchange process the installers will first knock on the doors of residences to let people know they are changing out meters.

"Throughout PG&E's

service areas they are installing meters at a rate of more than 1,000 a day. Even though we have done this, at this phenomenal rate, we still have only installed about 8 million to date out of 9.8 million residences."

Digital versus analog

Moreno said PG&E has converted to digital meter technology for two main purposes: operational efficiency and energy procurement savings, a complicated word for energy purchases.

In talking about the new meters' capability and energy costs, Moreno said, "Energy is consumed in blink of eye, energy doesn't store. PG&E generates some and purchases some from third parties, or merchant power companies.

"Depending on the time of day energy is more expensive. At 2 a.m., there is plenty of power available at a lower cost. Late afternoons, hot days, and between 4 - 5 p.m. when businesses are open, air conditioners are on, people are home from work and are cooking and have televisions on, the power grid reaches peak and PG&E

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Paul Moreno
PG&E

needs the infrastructure to meet the need," Moreno said.

He compared the difference of the times of the day in which energy is consumed to driving on the freeway in the Bay Area.

The difference between peak and non-peak hours is like driving at 1 a.m. compared to the rush hour traffic of 7 a.m.

"The cost of power becomes much more expensive when we have to build the electric grid with enough infrastructure on the grid that we can meet that rush hour-like demand," Moreno said.

"Right now a meter reader comes around once a month

and let's you know how many kilometers you used. You don't know usage history or how it affects your billing cycle," Moreno said.

"With a SmartMeter your usage will be measured about four times a day and will batch your use history into six-hour increments. After two months customers you will be able to go online and review ... usage history and take advantage of PG&E's SmartRate incentive program" he said.

How to collect incentives

Moreno said residential clients are billed by energy usage tiers and the lower the energy use, the lower the rate.

"The SmartMeters provides better customer information and more rate options from PG&E. A customer can access their account and review their usage patterns at pge.com/smartmeter," he said.

He said PG&E is encouraging customers to look at how they use energy during the peak service hours of 2 - 7 p.m.

"The California Public Utilities Commission is

requiring PG&E and other utilities to use more renewable power like solar, wind, certain kinds of hydro, and biomass as produced from sources like the local Collins Pine Mill.

"Because the CPUC mandate, PG&E is offering incentives for lower energy use during peak hours," Moreno said.

Peak usage hours are always from 2 - 7 p.m. on weekdays, never on a holiday and usually occur on the hottest (approximately 18) days of the year.

He said with the incentive programs customers are encouraged to use more energy before 2 p.m. and after 7 p.m. because it allows PG&E to use more of their renewable power rather than then purchasing the more costly peak time energy.

"Customers who have enrolled in SmartRate programs have reported high satisfaction. They say they have saved money. They also say they understand by not using peak energy they are helping the environment," Moreno said.

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