Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) / Meter Exchange

Frequently Asked Questions

Meter exchanges will begin in July of 2009 and continue through project completion expected to be late 2010.

1. **What is AMI and how does it work?**

AMI is the acronym for Advanced Metering Infrastructure, a technology originally called "AMR" or Automated Meter Reading. The AMI system uses existing power lines to communicate meter readings, voltage and outage information to the PUD's substations. This is called power line carrier technology or PLC. That data is then sent on to the PUD's offices over the PUD's fiber optic network.

2. **Why is Okanogan PUD installing an AMI system?**

There are several customer service, cost and efficiencies benefits associated with the AMI system that include but are not limited to:

- No longer sending meter readers or other PUD employees to each customer for monthly or bi-monthly meter reads, when there are questions with the reads or when an account changes status.
- Enables the PUD to convert all customers to monthly reads and billings which will improve the PUD's cash flow and present the customer with a smaller bill each month rather than the larger bill that comes every two months.
- Improves meter reading accuracy with no more miss-reads or estimated reads.
- Reduced PUD vehicle usage and fuel consumption that reduces cost and has environmental benefits.
- The PUD will check the system daily for power outages and can also check the system to see if the power is back on. This function will allow for quicker outage response and power restoration. This is not an automatic function so please call when your power goes off.
- The PUD will know when a meter has failed or there has been tampering rather than having the meter reader find the problem in the every two month meter reading.
- The meter provides electrical usage and load information for an engineering analysis tool.
- Customer Service Representatives will have current meter information at their finger tips when a customer calls with questions.

3. **Will all meters need to be changed and what will they look like?**

Yes, all meters will need to be changed to an electronic digital meter with a special module that allows data communication. The new meters will look very much like your existing meter with a digital display.

4. **When are the meter exchanges scheduled and will my power be out?**

The meter change outs will begin in the July of 2009 in the Ophir/Brewster area, then move to the Methow Valley, Pateros and progress north up the Okanogan Valley ending up in Oroville in late 2010. There will be a short power outage while the old meter is removed and the new installed (approximately 2 minutes).

5. **How will customers be notified when they are scheduled for the meter exchange?**

The PUD will use a variety of methods to notify customers in advance of their meter being changed such as the local newspapers, radio, the PUD's web page, newsletters and direct mailings to customers.

6. **When will the PUD begin remote reads and monthly billings?**

Remote reads will begin as soon as area substations get the required equipment installed, meters are exchanged and the new software is installed at the PUD's offices. This will probably start in the Ophir/Brewster area in late summer of 2009 and follow the installation schedule described in number 4 above. It is anticipated that the conversion to monthly billing will not begin until the entire PUD system is converted.

7. **What is the cost of installing the AMI system?**

The meters, equipment and software will cost the PUD approximately 4 million dollars. The PUD anticipates doing the work with existing staff. Cumulative industry experience shows a savings in cost and efficiencies of around $2.50 per meter per month so a payback to the PUD of approximately 6 years. The PUD will also have gains not included in the $2.50 by getting to the monthly reads and billings without adding staff. There will be no extra charge to the customer for the AMI project or the meter exchange.