



Gary K.
Meter Reader
9 years of service

ENERGY CONNECTIONS

SD/NE
JULY 2018

FAQ about smart meter technology

NorthWestern Energy will be installing smart electric meters and gas modules in South Dakota and Nebraska for our electric and gas customers as part of an advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) project that will enable two-way meter communication between NorthWestern Energy and its customers. Here are some frequently asked questions about smart meters:

What are smart meters?

Smart meters use digital technology similar to a mobile phone that will allow for two-way communication between NorthWestern Energy and its meters that are on customer homes and businesses. The meters will record energy use and safely and securely communicate to NorthWestern's computer data center.

Why smart meters?

Utilities across the United States and Canada have been replacing old-style electromechanical meters with digital smart meters for the past decade. Industry research groups estimate that approximately 50 percent of the 180 million electric meters in the U.S. and Canada are now smart, with the vast majority of those smart meters – approximately 95 percent or more – using RF (radio frequency) communication to send data to the energy company. It is estimated that by 2020, virtually all electric meters in the U.S. and Canada will be smart and electromechanical meter technology will be largely obsolete.

Who will get a smart meter?

Nearly all electric and gas customers in South Dakota and Nebraska will receive an upgrade. Electric customers will receive a new smart meter while natural gas customers will receive a smart module on their existing gas meter. The module on a gas meter records usage and communicates the information to NorthWestern Energy.

Who will do the installation?

The meters and modules will be installed by Itron, NorthWestern Energy's installation vendor. Itron personnel will be clearly identifiable and will carry proper identification. Installers will be wearing bright yellow safety vests with bright yellow shirts. They will be driving Ford Escapes with an "Itron Utility Services" logo on them.

What is the project timeline?

NorthWestern Energy is expecting to begin AMI installation in October 2018. The project is expected to wrap up by the end of 2019.

When will the meters be installed?

Customers will receive a letter a couple of weeks prior to installation in their area. Most of the installations will occur Monday through Friday during business hours, though there will be cases when evening or weekend installations may be necessary. Customers don't need to be home. A door hanger will let residents know their upgrade was successful. If the technician can't access the meter, a door hanger will be left with instructions to call to make an appointment.

Are radio frequency (RF) emissions coming from the meters and modules?

Yes, but the RF emissions are far below levels produced by common household devices including microwaves, mobile phones, baby monitors and TV systems. The Federal Communications Commission enforces the safety limits for all RF emissions, and smart meter and module emissions make up a small portion of the limit. For more about RF emissions, visit: www.itron.com/na/support/consumer-resource-center/radio-frequency-resource-center

Is customer information protected?

Yes. Customer privacy and security is very important to NorthWestern Energy. The company's strict security standards have contributed to protecting the energy grid and customer privacy for years. The meters do not collect, store or transmit personally identifiable information. Energy usage information that is transmitted will be encrypted.

How do smart meters benefit customers?

Smart meter technology will allow NorthWestern Energy to better support customer inquiries and pinpoint outages. The system will notify NorthWestern of an outage without the need for a customer to call in to notify the company. This allows our crews to return power to customers faster which improves

electric service reliability and power quality. The installation of smart meters will also provide current energy usage information to address customer questions related to bills, their energy use and opportunities for energy savings. It also increases customer's privacy and convenience because meter readers no longer will need regular access to customer's properties.

How do smart meters benefit NorthWestern Energy?

Smart meters and modules communicate energy usage information daily. That information is sent remotely to NorthWestern's computer data center for operations, billing and customer service. This means we will be able to better assist our customers with their individual energy needs and more quickly detect and respond to power outages and customer inquiries.

For more information about the project, please contact:

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Plan for storms

Thanks to Mother Nature and curious critters, occasional power outages are unavoidable. That's why we encourage our customers to plan for storm-related or other service interruptions. We care about our customers who rely on electricity for their special medical needs. That is why we want to remind them, or their caregivers, to make arrangements – ahead of time – for what to do during potential long-lasting electric interruptions.

While we're working to restore your service during an outage, here's what you can do:

- Turn off all the appliances you think were powered on before the interruption
- Unplug your electronic equipment, including computers
- Leave a light or radio on to let you know when you have service again
- Don't wire an emergency generator into your home. Back-feed from generators into power lines could injure or kill a lineman working to get electricity restored to your area; if you use a generator to power up a specific appliance – plug it in directly and make sure the generator is located outside so poisonous carbon monoxide fumes don't enter your home
- Keep these emergency supplies on hand: flashlights with fresh batteries, battery- powered radio, wind-up or battery-powered clock, non-cordless phone to plug in during outages – or cell phone with battery back-up, water and nonperishable food, emergency medicine back-up
- Use your mobile device to visit the outage map online and sign up for alerts on when power will be restored. You can report outages, check status of outages and more all without dialing the phone.
- Call our Contact Center; every call helps our crews and operators identify the potential cause and scale of the outage. During a storm, if you see a down or

damaged power line, keep your distance and call us immediately.

Whatever the cause of a service interruption, we understand that extended power losses lead to cancelled plans, disappointments and major inconveniences, and we greatly appreciate your patience and often work around the clock restoring service as quickly and safely as possible.

Protect your equipment with ever-increasing use of smart devices, flat screen TVs, gaming consoles and computers, surge protection is more important than ever. Power surges can come from slight fluctuations in your electric service caused by lightning, unplanned interruptions in our electric system, other users on the power line and internal surges from your air conditioners or power tools. Even the slightest fluctuations in power can possibly damage your sensitive electronic equipment.

You have several surge-protection options to consider. The first line of defense consists of installing surge protection at the service to protect your entire home. Another option is to use a surge protector that you plug into an outlet and then plug your device into the protector. However, please note that power strips and surge protectors may look alike but they are not the same. Read the package carefully to determine whether the device will protect your equipment against random power spikes or visit with a qualified electrician to help you determine what level of protection you might need.

Types of power disruptions include outages, sags/surges, spikes and "noise." They can last a few seconds to a few days depending on the impact and cause. While some deviations are outside our control, count on us to work hard to deliver power that meets industry standards for power quality.

No posts on poles

Lost your pet? We are so sorry.

Having a garage sale? Sounds like a lot of work!

New band in town? What a fun evening!

Running for office? Good luck!

We wish you the best in advertising for whatever reason, but ask you not to post information on our power poles.

Working on power poles can be a dangerous job. To ensure reliable service, line crews must climb up and down poles in all kinds of weather, day and night. The job is made even more hazardous if people put nails or heavy staples on power poles to attach signs and posters. This may seem harmless but can become a

nightmare for line crews. Nails and staples can increase the danger of electrocution if they come in contact with live wires.

Line crews wear protective clothing and gloves to prevent electric shocks. Sharp, protruding nails can tear this protective equipment, and result in injury. They also have special boots and climbing hooks to allow them to get up the pole to inspect or make repairs to lines. If these hooks hit metal, they may be deflected, causing the line crewmember to fall.

Our line crews are on the job to assure you quality, efficient, dependable service. Show them you care by not using power poles as billboards.



Photo by: Doug Sublette

Contact us...

MONTANA

Customer Contact Center (888) 467-2669
 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F
 Emergency 24/7 Service
 Call Before You Dig 811
 Energy Efficiency (800) 823-5995

NEBRASKA

Customer Contact Center (800) 245-6977
 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F
 Emergency 24/7 Service
 Call Before You Dig 811

SOUTH DAKOTA

Customer Contact Center (800) 245-6977
 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F
 Emergency 24/7 Service
 Call Before You Dig 811

PAYMENT

Automated Phone
 Payment Option: (800) 218-4959
 (via checking, savings, or money market account)
 SpeedPay Automated
 Phone Payment Option: (877) 361-4927
 (via credit card account)

CONNECT WITH US



We are required to translate important customer information for populations in our service area that meet a certain threshold. We have two languages that currently meet that threshold: Spanish and Karenic.

Nos preocupamos por su seguridad. Este anexo a su factura incluye mensajes importantes sobre seguridad que usted necesita saber con respecto al servicio público que le proporciona NorthWestern Energy. Comuníquese con nosotros si desea recibir la información de seguridad en español, llamando al teléfono 888-467-2669 (en Montana) 800-245-6977 (en South Dakota o Nebraska) y pregunte por las opciones de idiomas para los anexos de sus facturas.

ပတ်သက်သည့်အချက်အလက်များအားရရှိလိုပါက၊ လက်ကိုင်ဖုန်းဖြင့် NorthWestern Energy သို့မဟုတ် 888-467-2669 (Montana) 800-245-6977 (South Dakota or Nebraska) ကို ဖုန်းဆက်၍ မေးမြန်းနိုင်ပါသည်။ အခြားဘာသာစကားဖြင့် အချက်အလက်များကို လိုအပ်ပါက ကုမ္ပဏီ၏ ဝက်ဘ်ဆိုက်မှ သို့မဟုတ် အခြားစာရွက်စာတမ်းများကို ကြည့်ရှုနိုင်ပါသည်။

