



Check out  
our outage  
map

**Kristy S.**  
Mobile Workforce  
Dispatcher  
20 years of service

# ENERGY CONNECTIONS

SD/NE  
JULY 2019

## FAQ about smart meter technology

NorthWestern Energy has begun 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 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 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.

### What is the project timeline?

NorthWestern Energy began deploying AMI in 2018 and work continues through 2019. Crews recently began installations in Nebraska and will continue in South Dakota with additional installations throughout the fall.

### 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.

### 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](http://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 privacy and convenience because meter readers no longer will need regular access to customers' 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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# What to do during an outage

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 the appliance directly into the generator 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, and emergency medicine back-up.
- Use your mobile device to visit the outage map online ([northwesternenergy.com/outages](http://northwesternenergy.com/outages)) 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 (800-245-6977) or report the outage online ([northwesternenergy.com/outages](http://northwesternenergy.com/outages)). Every customer report helps our crews and

operators identify the potential cause and scale of the outage.

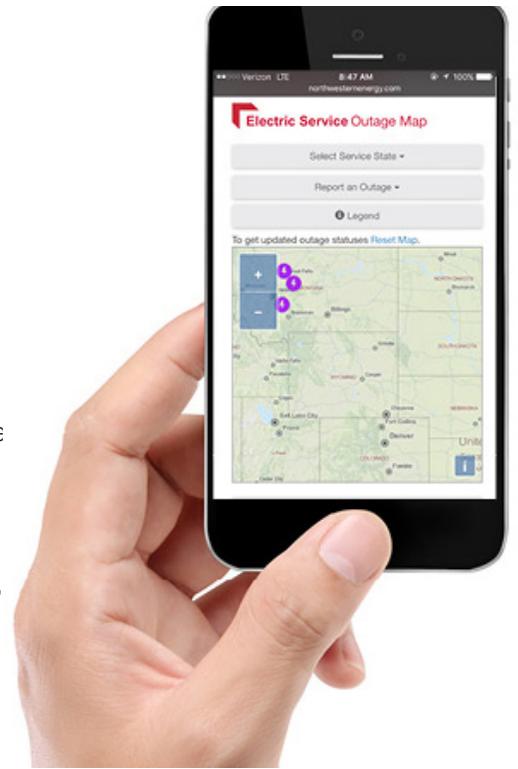
- During a storm, if you see a downed or damaged power line, keep your distance and call us immediately.

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

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.



## 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



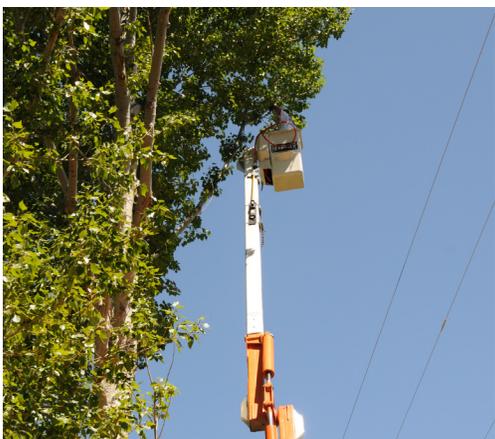
We are required to translate important customer information for populations in our service area that meet a certain threshold. We have two languages that currently meet that threshold: Spanish and Karenic.

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.

ပတၢ်ယိၣ်န့ၣ်တၢ်လာ၊ နတၢ်ပူၤဖျးအဂီၢ်န့ၣ်လီၤ. လံာ်တၢ်ယုက့ၢ်စရိဘျး(လ) လၢ တၢ်ထၢန့ၣ်လီၤအိၤဆၢ ဟ့ၣ်ယုက့ၢ်တၢ်ဘၢတၢ်ကစီၣ်အရ့ၢ်တဖၣ်လၢ နတြးသ့ၣ်ညါအိၤဆၢ အဘၣ်ယုက့ၢ် NorthWestern Energy ထံၣ်မ့ၣ်အူတၢ်မၤန့ၣ်လီၤ. ဆဲးကျၢပုၤဖဲ နမ့ၢ်လီၣ်ဘၣ် တၢ်ဂံၢ်တၢ်ဂၢၢ်တဖၣ်လၢ ပုၤတၢ်ညါန့ၣ် (Karenic) . ဒိဖျိ တၢ်ဂီၢ်လိာ်တံၣ်ဆူ 888-467-2669 (လာမိၣ်ထီၣ်န့ၣ် (Montana) အပူၤ)800-245-6977 (လာကလံာ်စိး ဂီၢ်ထီၣ် (South Dakota) မ့တဖၣ် န့ၣ်တြးစခၣ် (Nebraska)) \*ယုန့ၣ်လၢ တၢ်ကထာန့ၣ်လီၤ က့ၢ်စရိကျိၣ်တၢ်ယုထၢတဖၣ်အဂီၢ်န့ၣ်တက့ၢ်.



# Downed trees and power lines



Recently, NorthWestern Energy responded to a few outage reports where recently cut trees had inadvertently fallen into energized power lines. In a few cases, people were putting themselves in serious danger by

trying to remove the tree themselves. Always contact your utility company and never touch a power line or any object, including trees, that are in contact with a line.

Some simple reminders:

- Always maintain adequate clearance from power lines. Keep people, equipment and objects at least 10 feet away.
- Never attempt to remove a fallen tree or branch from a power line. You could be seriously injured or killed.
- If a tree or branch does come in contact with a power line, keep yourself and others away from the tree and contact your utility company.

Visit [northwesternenergy.com](http://northwesternenergy.com) for additional electrical safety tips.