Common Questions Regarding Smart Meters

What makes "smart" meters smart?
The fact is that so-called "smart meters" aren't smart. Their core function – metering your electric use – is the same as the old analog meters.

The difference is that the new meters use digital technology that allows the consumer to be "smarter." The old analog or electrical mechanical meters did not provide much useful information. Consumers with smart meters can track their consumption of electricity down to 15-minute intervals via the Smart meter Internet portal or an in-home monitor, helping them make more informed energy choices. The old meters required a meter reader on-site to take monthly readings. Smart meters can be read remotely and will automatically notify the utility about power outages. Smart meters are the first step in moving the electric grid into the digital age.

How can I find out if I have Smart meters technology in my service area?
You may contact your local utility for further information concerning specific programs.

Do Smart meters relay my personal information?
No. No personal information is displayed on the outside or contained in the new meter. Your account number, address, and personal information are never transmitted by the meter. Smart meters relay a code that is associated with your account along with usage information on a 15 minute interval. The data transmitted by the meter is also encrypted for your protection.

What are the benefits of smart meters?
Smart meters make possible a new energy future:

• Remote meter reading – Utilities will be able to read smart meters remotely, virtually eliminating the need to go house to house to read electric meters, which means fewer trucks on the road, less cost for the ratepayer, and less CO2 emissions.

• Fewer truck rolls also reduces expenses related to providing electricity. Those savings are then passed on to ratepayers through reduced rates.

• Faster transactions and order processing - The Smart meter's remote capability can mean requests for connection and disconnection of electric service can be filled more quickly.

• In the future, Electrical power could be restored around the clock with less manpower and in many cases much more quickly than before.

• Automatic outage notification – Smart meters will automatically notify the utilities about power outages to help restore power more quickly.

• Energy efficiency and savings – Consumers can more closely monitor their electricity use to better manage energy costs by making even small changes, such as adjusting

their thermostat. Consumers can also take advantage of optional rate programs (where available) made possible through the use of Smart meters.

• Environmental benefits - If consumers reduce energy use, less power may have to be produced, which is good for the environment.

Can smart meters help me save money?
Yes. Many utility customers are already reporting savings from smart meters. In addition to those items listed in the answer to the previous question, a smart meter gives customers access to their energy use and cost information via a free web portal. That information is made available with the installation of a smart meter and can help customers change usage patterns and lower their energy use. Smart meters allow more flexibility in the use of rate plans, such as OPTIONAL time-of-use rate plans, which result in even greater savings.

Will I now pay more for peak time usage?
Time-of-use rates are an optional rate plan for ratepayers. These optional plans allow the ratepayer to control when and how electricity is consumed. Shifting certain functions, such as laundry, pool pumps, and cooking to off-peak times of day can result in lower overall bills. Please contact your utility for more information concerning their particular time-of-use plan options.

My bill went up after I got a smart meter. Why?
Installing a smart meter does not cause your bill to rise. The meter is set to the same standard as the meter it replaces. However, many customers have experienced higher bills during the summer of 2011 due to historically high temperatures. This experience is due to weather and not impacted by the Smart Meter installation.

The following list includes other common factors that may result in higher energy consumption:

• Temperature extremes (i.e., winter and summer)
• Seasonal usage such as pool pumps or holiday lighting can create spikes in usage.
• Vacation periods, with more people at home during the day, can be times of high usage.
• Electronics, such as computers, LCD and plasma TVs, and gaming systems comprise an increasing percentage of home electricity consumption.

The cost to install the Oklahoma Gas and Electric Smart Grid technology was paid for in part by a Federal Grant and in part through an additional charge on customers' bills. This charge is calculated as part of the overall cost to provide electric service. Click here to see the average cost for a customer.

How do I read the meter?
Smart meters display information in a variety of ways. Consumers will still be able to see meter readings in a digital format similar to the old analog meters. Basically, you can check the digital box on your meter and wait for the display to show a series of numbers. You can read these numbers left to right, record them and subtract them from the next cycle reading. This information will provide you with the amount of kilowatt-hours (kWh) consumed over that time period. In addition, consumers will be able to view real time readings through the online web portals and can qualify for free monthly usage reports. In-home devices will also be available for connection in the future. Please contact your local utility for their specific programs.

Are Smart meters accurate?
Yes. Smart meters must meet the same standards for testing and accuracy as the old analog meters. In independent side-by-side testing, Smart meters were actually shown to be more accurate than traditional electromechanical meters.

What is a Smart meter web portal?
Smart meter web portals allow customers with Smart meters to track their usage in 15 minute intervals with very little lag time. The website will also show your current energy cost and will give you helpful information that can be used to change behaviors and save money. Of course, the behavior changes are totally voluntary. Most web portals will also show you how you are doing compared to average homes similar to yours. Please contact your local utility for their availability of a web portal.

Where do I get an in-home monitor? How much do they cost?
One of the potential benefits of smart meters is their ability to give consumers access to detailed data on their electricity use via an in-home monitor (up-to-the-minute) or web portal. Studies show that making usage data easily available to consumers does encourage them to make energy-saving changes in usage. In-home monitors are not yet widely available but should become available at retail stores with a range of options (such as a forecast of the monthly bill amount based on usage to date) in a range of prices. The large regulated utilities are currently working with the Commission to test in-home devices and will have study related information available in early 2012.

Are smart meters secure from electronic attacks?
Yes. Security is of concern to the Commission when considering Smart meter projects. To date, the programs approved have been subject to extensive third party testing. Again, it is also important to remember that no personal or account data is transmitted by the Smart meter.

Will smart meters let the utility or other entities know what appliances I am using or what television programming I am watching?
No. Consumer privacy is very important to the Commission. The Smart meter only transmits total power consumed in 15 minute intervals. While advanced Smart meter systems that track "per appliance" usage will be available in the future, the program will be voluntary and will only show the power consumed.

Do smart meters interfere with my security systems, pacemaker, cell phone or other electronics?
No. The transmitting devices operate in compliance with 47 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 15 regulations, which require coexistence with other Part 15 certified devices. This rule facilitates multiple devices operating in the same location.

Was the Smart meter technology tested in Oklahoma before wide-scale implementation?
Yes. The Smart meter technology was used and tested over a three year period in a program that involved thousands of volunteer ratepayers in the OG&E service territory. Before final approval was given, the data was thoroughly reviewed for proof that the program would result in cost savings and reliability improvements for the consumer.

Can I refuse to have a Smart meter?
Currently, no regulated electric utility in Oklahoma offers an opt out provision for smart meters. A utilitys decision to use smart meters is based on cost savings and reliability benefits. Those benefits would obviously be impacted by keeping some analog meters. For example, one analog meter in a neighborhood would still require a meter reader to go and physically read the meter.