

## OPINIONS

## Getting zapped in the Applegate!

*Is the smart grid as safe as claimed?*

BY TOM KLINEFELTER

Pacific Power tells us that smart meters are safe, present no health hazards, and are approved by the FCC (Federal Communications Commission). However, US government agencies have made similar claims over the years about such things as asbestos, dioxins, lead paint, DDT, PCBs, mercury, etc., all of which are now considered extremely toxic. Today, wireless devices are touted as safe, but what about 20 years from now?

The FCC was established to oversee the commercial distribution of the RF (radio frequency) spectrum, which has nothing to do with the risks and health hazards associated with RF microwave radiation. They set safety limits that are hundreds of times higher than levels established by medical institutes and governments around the world. This unconscionable standard has made it easy for the telecommunications industry to have their equipment approved.

I was an aviation electronics technician in the US Navy in the early '70s and worked over 40 years as an electrical engineer in one capacity or another. Over the past two years I have spent hundreds of hours researching and studying wireless technology and its radiation fields. I moved to the Applegate Valley hoping to distance my family from the concentrated RF radiation in urban areas, but it is encroaching much faster than I imagined. In 1985 there were 900 cell towers in the US and today there are over 215,000 and growing rapidly.

I appreciate new technology and use a laptop and cell phone daily, but like any tool or appliance, they pose a potential health risk if not used safely. Instruction manuals for power tools and household appliances are very forthright with proper safety precautions; however, with wireless equipment, there are no clearly listed safety precautions. Unlike chainsaws, power tools, and kitchen appliances, where the dangers are fairly obvious, RF radiation, which covers a frequency range from one kHz (kilohertz) to one THz (terahertz, or one thousand to one trillion cycles per second), is not usually detectable by our five senses.

I purchased some RF and EMF (electromagnetic field) radiation meters over two years ago and have been surveying homes of family and friends ever since. Some of the strongest RF fields generated within homes are emitted from cordless phones, Wi-Fi routers, baby monitors, cell phones, laptops,

iPads, smart appliances, and RF digital utility meters. I have also found some very strong EMF radiation emitted from lower frequency ranges associated with our standard 120/240 VAC 60 Hz electric appliances. These radiation sources are within our control, but smart meters are not and emit RF radiation constantly, with over 10,000 pulses every day.

Smart meters have been installed throughout southern Oregon, and many residents are unaware that it has happened. But there are still steps we can take that will set precedents for the rest of the state, as the rollout for the Portland area isn't scheduled until the fourth quarter of 2018. By signing the online Change.org petition, you automatically email a notice to Oregon Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Chair, Megan Decker; Pacific Power President/CEO, Stefan Bird; and Oregon Governor, Kate Brown, along with our other Oregon elected officials. The petition address is [change.org](http://change.org)—enter “Megan Decker Oregon PUC” into the search bar.

Smart meters were installed in California several years ago, and now there are hundreds of lawsuits against the power companies. Thousands of smart meters are being removed, and people are even being reimbursed for the extorted opt-out fees. The state of New Mexico has banned smart meters throughout the entire state. It's important for the health and safety of our future generations that we educate ourselves about the hazards of radiation and continue to raise this awareness in our neighborhoods, schools, and work environments.

I won't begin to address the serious health hazards of RF radiation and smart meters in this article, as a plethora of rapidly expanding, well-documented scientific research, hard facts, and evidence are available on websites, in books, and film documentaries. I highly recommend watching two brilliant documentaries, *Generation Zapped* by Sabine El Gemayel and *Take Back Your Power* by Josh del Sol.

You can also email me at [awarenessonradiation@gmail.com](mailto:awarenessonradiation@gmail.com) or [freedom2sayno2smartmeters@gmail.com](mailto:freedom2sayno2smartmeters@gmail.com) in Talent with any questions you might have about smart meters or RF radiation.

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Smart meters—  
pick your battles thoughtfully

BY HOPE ROBERTSON

As smart meters are installed in Oregon, a number of friends have called to ask me about allowing the local utility to install one. For the past few decades I have worked as a consultant, researching issues and policies in the electric power industry, including smart meters.

Pacific Power recently installed the latest smart meter at our home. Once an hour the meter takes a reading of our electrical consumption. Using low-level radio-frequency (RF) electromagnetic radiation—essentially waves of electric and magnetic energy moving together—our smart meter transmits this data to a receiver somewhere in the local area. The data transmission takes less than a second. Over the course of a day, our smart meter is sending out low-level RF waves for less than half a minute. The rest of the time it is not emitting RF radiation.

Should you be concerned about less than half a minute of possible exposure to low-level RF waves emitted by your smart meter? My opinion is that for most people, compared to other sources of health risks we all currently face, it's not worth the upset and expensive battle to fight having a smart meter installed.

Right now, you are exposed to low-level RF EMF (electromagnetic field) from natural and man-made sources such as microwave ovens, cell phones, baby monitors, cordless phones, Wi-Fi routers, TV and radio broadcasts, and more. So far, I have not seen any definitive proof linking a specific device (including a smart meter) to increased cancer or any of the myriad of health issues raised by some people.

Yes, there are alarming websites claiming all sorts of horrible health impacts. An equal number of websites claim there are none. To a researcher this suggests that the jury is still out. The World Health Organization and the American Cancer Society have done extensive research on RF radiation and concluded these various RF emitting

devices might be a possible cause of cancer or other health effects, but it is extremely difficult to prove that the source was a specific RF emitting device versus other causes.

Does this mean the RF waves we are now bombarded with everywhere we go are harmless? Probably not. But when I sit down to think about the relative risks to my health from smart meters versus the chemicals in our foods (think Roundup), what lurks in our drinking water (think about all the pharmaceuticals flushed down the drain), or the health impacts of climate change, smart meters just don't come out high on my list of items to get worked up about.

Everyone views risk differently. Our smart meter is not on the side of our house but about 60 feet away. If our meter were located on the house outside the bedroom wall and at the head of our bed with a very thin wall separating us from the smart meter, I might ask the power company to move it to another location. But short of that, I think our smart meter poses a very minor health risk for my husband and me.

I also look at the level of the risk versus the cost of deciding to minimize that risk. First, opting out of a smart meter means spending a one-time fee of \$137 (if you opt out after a smart meter is installed) and then another fee of \$169 to re-install it when you move out of your house. On top of that you have to pay \$36 per month to cover the costs of someone coming out to read your analog meter.

I feel a better investment in my health would be buying healthy, locally produced organic food. Or donating this amount of money to a worthy environmental or health cause.

It is a sad statement about the state of our planet that one has to assess relative levels of risk in everything in your life, but as my title states, pick your battles thoughtfully.

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Organizations seeking volunteers can post on the website so that folks wanting to help can find available volunteer positions. More details to be announced on the *Applegater's* Facebook page.



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