

Smart meters Q&A with Pacific Power

Pacific Power is upgrading to smart meters to improve the way we power our customers' lives both at home and at work. Across the US, more than half of all homes currently use smart meters, and we're pleased to bring this upgrade to the Applegate community.

Smart meters are digital electric meters that communicate with Pacific Power through a wireless network. These meters utilize safe and secure wireless technology that will provide customers with greater insights into their energy usage, while helping us deliver cleaner, more reliable energy and faster, more responsive service.

Smart meters will help customers identify ways to save on their monthly electric bill. The meters also instantly alert us when an outage occurs, helping us to pinpoint the problem and get power restored more quickly. All in all, smart meters are an upgrade that will allow us to better serve our customers now and into the future.

Thank you to the *Applegater* newsmagazine for the opportunity to answer the questions below.

Can exposure to radiation from smart meters be harmful?

Smart meters transmit data using low-watt radio frequency (RF) waves that are proven to be safe and are well within the limits set by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). These waves are something we encounter every day and are used for everything from radio and television broadcasts to cordless phones, cell phones, Wi-Fi routers, garage-door openers, and microwave ovens. Smart meters communicate for only a few minutes per day and are usually outdoors, farther from people than other devices that use RF. Living near a smart meter for 20 years is like making a single, 30-minute cell phone call.

What is the chance of fires caused by smart meters?

We want to reassure the community that the smart meters we are installing do not increase the risk of fire. We put our smart meters through extensive testing to ensure their safety. They not only meet or exceed ANSI standards, but are certified by UL testing labs and tested by a third party. We also require the meter manufacturer to test each meter prior to shipment, and we review all test results. Our qualified installers will carefully inspect the meter base and will also make needed repairs before installing the new meter.

How secure is the data transmitted by smart meters?

We take our customers' privacy very seriously and use the most advanced security and encryption technology to

protect our customers' information. In fact, Pacific Power's security measures undergo third-party audits to ensure that data is 100 percent secure.

The only data transmitted by smart meters is whole-home energy use. No personal information, such as name, address, or account number, is ever transmitted from smart meters. Pacific Power also receives no information on the specifics of your energy use and cannot track or record individual appliance usage. For example, if a customer used 3 kWh of electricity in a given hour, the smart meter would simply transmit "3 kWh." This total usage amount is the same information that traditional meters have always recorded.

Is Pacific Power going to sell the data?

Because we respect our customers' privacy, we would not sell information about any whole-house energy usage or any other customer data. As a matter of policy, Pacific Power is committed to safeguarding the privacy of individuals and businesses with respect to nonpublic, personal, and financial information.

Will smart meters increase the monthly bills of customers?

There is no installation fee and no monthly charge for the meter. In fact, both home and business customers can use the information their smart meter provides to get use insights on their energy usage and potentially lower their monthly bills.

Will opt-out costs be discontinued or reduced?

In response to customer and community feedback, Pacific Power filed a proposal with the Oregon Public Utility Commission to remove the upfront smart meter opt-out fee of \$137 at this time and re-evaluate it in the future. The proposal was approved by the Commission on August 14. This cost-based fee, which covers the future installation of a smart meter, was originally approved by the Commission last year before smart meter deployment began. By seeking to remove the fee, Pacific Power intends to reduce the financial impact for customers who opt-out while also helping to ensure the safety of our installers. Customers who opt out before a smart meter is installed will be charged only \$36 per month for manually reading an existing meter.

We encourage anyone who needs additional information on smart meters and Pacific Power's installation of the technology in Oregon to visit our website at pacificpower.net/smartmeter or call 866-869-8520. We are happy to help.

Looking forward to another great school year

BY RICH HALSTED

This year starts my second year as a board member of Three Rivers School District. It has truly been a privilege getting to meet the students, employees, and fantastic community volunteers and partners. The highlight of my first year on the board was meeting the graduates as they received their diplomas—truly an awesome opportunity. I am humbled by the hard work everyone in the district puts forth, and it is a privilege to serve. It is apparent that the folks involved with the schools make a difference each and every day.

I can personally attest that each of the board members cares deeply about education. We continue to work toward goals to improve the quality of the district. Simply speaking, we want our students not only to graduate but also to be prepared for college or a career.

One of the main goals is getting our graduation rate above 85 percent. This is certainly a challenge—historically almost one in three students does not graduate. I'm hopeful that when the state releases the graduation rates later this year we will have taken that important first step toward achieving this goal.

Another goal is improving our communication across the district. We took this to another level and held one board meeting at each of the three high schools to ensure that we heard from all the communities. Prior to the meetings, we held student panels to hear the concerns of the students directly. These provided exceptional dialog and insight on where we need to improve. The feedback was so invaluable that we are doubling the number of board meetings outside the district office and will also meet with our middle-school students.

You may have already heard that we were forced to cut a couple of school days. This could have been much worse if our employees hadn't made some significant sacrifices. This move is simply wrong, and we must work to not only get our days back but also to fix long-term funding issues. The school

board has very little to do with revenue and relies heavily on the state.

Although the laws that govern revenue disbursement may seem equitable on the surface, they have a negative effect on rural schools. One example is transportation. Last year our busing averaged over 9,000 miles a day; however, we are provided money for only 70 percent of those costs. We have to take money away from elsewhere to make up for the shortfall. In an urban area this would not have such a debilitating effect. My intent is to make sure each of our elected officials is aware of the revenue shortfalls and challenge each to provide a solution. I'm not advocating for more taxes, just a fairer distribution.

On the district side, we need to continue to scrutinize our spending while looking at how to be more efficient over the long term without causing harm to our communities. One example of this was a small boundary change that will take some building space pressure off Madrona Elementary. We heard, loud and clear, the community concerns and believe we provided a balanced solution that provides relief to the school at zero cost. Most importantly, we took into account the concerns of the local community.

The greatest asset to our schools is the community that supports them. Three Rivers schools are as diverse as the area that surrounds them. Our schools would struggle if we didn't have the volunteerism that each community provides. I encourage you to talk to your local principal and see where your talents can best be utilized. Although we are not a wealthy district, we are rich in the fact that we have so many fantastic teachers, staff, and community volunteers.

The school board meets on the third Wednesday of each month. Please visit our website at threerivers.k12.or.us for the location.

Rich Halsted, Board Member
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Applegate resident on Dean's List (again!)

Central Oregon Community College announced that Applegate resident Samantha Bango has qualified for the Spring 2018 Dean's List. Samantha is enrolled in 12 or more graded credits and received a term grade point average of 3.6 or better.

Congratulations, Samantha!



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