



Energy InSightSM Frequently Asked Questions

CenterPoint Energy will deploy more than 2 million smart electric meters across its 5,000-square-mile service territory between 2009 and mid 2012.

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If you have a question you don't see answered here or elsewhere at www.CenterPointEnergy.com/energyinsight, e-mail energyinsight@centerpointenergy.com.



What is Energy InSightSM?

Energy InSightSM is CenterPoint Energy's system of integrated "smart" technologies designed to give consumers more control over their energy consumption, including smart electric meters and associated communications infrastructure and back-office computer systems as well as electric grid monitoring devices, remote switches and other automated electric distribution equipment.

Why is it called Energy InSightSM?

The new smart technologies CenterPoint Energy is deploying can give consumers greater insight into their energy usage to help them make smart energy choices. CenterPoint Energy will also have greater insight into the status of our systems, with an improved ability to pinpoint outages, monitor electric equipment load, and provide near real-time usage data ... and more, as additional technology components are added.

What smart technologies are you deploying?

In December 2008, CenterPoint Energy received approval from the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) to deploy more than 2 million smart meters across its electric service territory in and around Houston, beginning in March 2009. The deployment of more than 2 million smart meters is scheduled for completion in mid 2012 with the aid of a federal stimulus grant.

CenterPoint Energy is testing advanced power line equipment that can enable one of the world's first intelligent electric grids. The company is receiving a Smart Grid Grant from the Department of Energy under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which will be used in part to begin improving electric reliability and outage restoration by strengthening the grid with automated intelligent grid equipment.

Why are you installing smart meters?

There are two basic reasons: (1) the need to conserve resources through more efficient use of energy (2) to move the electric grid into the digital age. The Internet has shaped expectations for information access, but the utility industry lags behind. Imagine filling up your car's gas tank without seeing how many gallons you bought or how much it costs until receiving a bill weeks later. Today, consumers cannot get real-time electric consumption and cost information due to the industry's technology gap. As energy-related expenses rise along with concern for the environment, the time is right to implement CenterPoint Energy's smart metering system.

What makes "smart" meters smart?

Smart meters are the first step in moving the electric grid into the digital age. The old meters are based on old analog technology. They require a meter reader to be onsite to take monthly meter readings. They do not provide consumers with much useful information. Digital smart meters send electric usage information between CenterPoint Energy and consumers via two-way wireless communications. Consumers with smart meters can track their consumption of electricity down to 15-minute intervals via the Smart Meter Texas Internet portal or in-home



monitor to make more informed energy choices. Smart meters can be read remotely and will automatically notify CenterPoint Energy about power outages. Smart meters will be able to interact with future smart appliances in a Home Area Network to allow consumers to manage thermostats and electric appliances remotely.

Do smart meters have other benefits?

This innovative technology should encourage Houston-area electric consumers to conserve energy by giving them the ability to better monitor and manage their electric use more frequently and in greater detail. Smart meters make possible a new energy future:

- **Remote meter reading** – CenterPoint Energy 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.
- **Smoother transactions** – Remote connection and disconnection of electric service should reduce the time it takes to process service orders at most homes.
- **Automatic outage notification** – Smart meters will automatically notify CenterPoint Energy about power outages to help us restore power more quickly.
- **Energy efficiency and savings** – Consumers can more closely monitor their electricity use to better manage energy costs by making small changes such as adjusting their thermostat.
- **Environmental benefits** - If consumers conserve energy, less power may have to be produced, which is good for the environment.
- **New products and services** – Retail Electric Providers (REPs), who sell the electricity CenterPoint Energy delivers, can now offer new products and services.
- **Home Area Networks (HANs)** – Smart meters can interact with Zigbee -compatible HAN devices such as thermostats or other electric appliances so consumers can operate them remotely. Check with your Retail Electric Provider for more information on their smart-meter-enabled service offerings.

Do smart meters benefit the environment?

CenterPoint Energy's smart meters and intelligent grid can significantly benefit the environment by reducing consumption of fossil fuel resources, thereby reducing emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) and other air pollutants. Environmental benefits can be achieved in three ways:

1. Reducing electricity consumption and increasing transmission and distribution efficiency

Studies suggest that given the ability to monitor their energy use more frequently in greater detail, many consumers may begin turning off unneeded appliances, change to more efficient lighting, adjust thermostats and make other energy-saving changes. If consumers conserve energy, less power may need to be produced. Reduced emissions

from potentially decreased power generation could translate into better air quality in Houston.

2. Reducing CenterPoint Energy’s vehicular needs

CenterPoint Energy’s smart meters will also reduce the consumption of resources and associated emission of greenhouse gases and other pollutants associated with performing basic utility services such as connections, disconnections, and meter readings, which can be conducted remotely for consumers with smart meters without sending a truck.

3. Promoting distributed and renewable energy production and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles

Finally, the company’s smart grid will create a platform that will promote the development and deployment of technologies for increasing distributed generation (DG) and energy storage capacity, such as wind and solar generation, and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs). Our smart meters measure surplus electricity generated as well as electricity delivered, eliminating the need for installation of expensive specialized DG metering. Distributed generation can help reduce the need for new fossil-fuel-generated capacity and therefore benefit the environment. The smart grid will also include technologies that facilitate the use of PHEVs, thereby reducing the consumer’s reliance on gasoline and diesel-fueled vehicles.

How much will this cost?

The Texas Legislature and the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) have authorized utilities to assess Retail Electric Providers (REPs) a surcharge to recover the cost of smart meters. The surcharge, which was to have been spread over a 12-year period, is \$3.24 per month for each residential consumer for the first 24 months, beginning in February 2009; thereafter, the surcharge will be reduced to \$3.05 per month. The receipt of federal stimulus funds should reduce the duration of this surcharge.

You can save more than \$3 per month now by using energy efficiently. In fact, one compact fluorescent (CFL) light bulb can save you \$30* or more over the life of the bulb. For energy efficiency tips, visit CenterPointEnergy.com/EnergyInSight.

The total cost of a limited Intelligent Grid deployment, to be completed in 2013, that will serve half a million people inside the 610 Loop is \$100 million: \$50 million will come from the federal grant.

*Source: Energy Star.

Can smart meters help me save money?

That depends on several factors including wholesale electricity prices, retail service offerings, and your energy consumption habits. Smart meters make more information about your energy use available to you. If you choose to use that information to lower your energy consumption, you could save money. Studies suggest that raising consumer awareness of energy use does lead



to lower consumption, which should not only save money for consumers who reduce their usage, but also could lower the cost of electricity for all consumers. In addition, smart meters will allow Retail Electric Providers to offer time-of-use rates that encourage energy use during off-peak periods. For example, customers might pay less to run appliances at night.

What is the Smart Meter Texas portal? Why can't I find my meter in the portal?

The Smart Meter Texas web site was designed by IBM on behalf of a consortium of electric transmission and distribution utilities, including CenterPoint Energy, Oncor, and American Electric Power, to give customers with smart meters in the service territories of these utilities more control over their electricity use.

After a testing and acceptance period of up to two months following the installation of their smart meter*, consumers can register at www.SmartMeterTexas.com to access detailed views of their electric usage history in 13-month, 30-day, or 24-hour snapshots down to 15-minute intervals including usage data up to 24-48 hours before the current day.

The Smart Meter Texas portal also allows Retail Electric Providers (REPs) to access their smart meter customers' usage information to support retail offerings such as energy analysis tools, time-of-use rates, and pre-paid service. Through the portal, REPs can also connect Home Area Network devices to smart meters to help consumers better manage their electricity use by remotely controlling smart electric appliances and thermostats, which are under development by a number of manufacturers.

For more information, or to register your meter, visit www.SmartMeterTexas.com or call the Smart Meter Texas Help Desk at 1-888-616-5859. ***If you do not find your meter on the portal, it may not yet have completed the 60-day acceptance period.*** Check with CenterPoint Energy at 713-207-2222 or 1-800-332-7143 or call your retail electric provider to find out when your smart meter is ready for the Smart Meter Texas portal.

Note: CenterPoint Energy electric delivery customers without smart meters can visit <http://deis.centerpointenergy.com> to view their electric usage.

*Some smart meters are being installed in newly constructed homes and business facilities outside scheduled deployment areas where the telecommunications infrastructure necessary for fully functional smart meter is not yet in place. These smart meters will not become fully functional until this supporting infrastructure is in place at the time that area is scheduled for smart meter deployment.



Will I be able to buy variable rate (time of use) electricity as soon as my smart meter is installed?

Retail programs designed to take advantage of smart meters or Home Area Network (HAN) features should become increasingly available as more smart meters are installed. Check with your Retail Electric Provider about their smart-meter enabled service offerings

When will my meter be installed?

CenterPoint Energy will install more than 2 million smart electric meters between March 2009 and mid 2012. To find out when your meter will be installed, visit www.CenterPointEnergy.com/smartmeterschedule. You should receive door hangers before and after your meter has been installed.

CenterPoint Energy has been selected by the Department of Energy to receive a Smart Grid Investment Grant under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Receipt of the \$200 million we've requested will accelerate our deployment plan to be substantially complete in 2012 versus 2014 as originally scheduled.

Will there be a specific day when you will install the meter? What if my gate is locked? Do I just have to leave the gate unlocked?

A contract company, North Houston Pole Line, is installing the new smart meters for CenterPoint Energy. Meters are installed within approximately eight weeks of the hanging of the "your meter is coming" door hanger. While the deployment schedule is known, the specific date a specific meter will be installed will not be known until just before the installation and can change depending on weather or other factors. If the meter cannot be installed because of an access issue (i.e. locked gate, dog, etc.), you will receive a door hanger with a phone number to call North Houston Pole Line to schedule an appointment for the meter installation.

How long will it take to install my new meter?

Installation of your smart meter will take about 10 minutes, during which you will experience a very brief power outage. In most cases, the installation can be completed even if you are not at home as long as your existing meter is accessible.

How do you decide who gets a meter first? Can I get mine now?

Smart meters will be installed along meter reading routes. Deployment, which includes installation not only of smart meters but also of associated communications infrastructure, began in March 2009 in the central Houston area and will move outward until more than 2 million smart meters are installed by mid 2012. The deployment schedule was approved by the Public Utility Commission of Texas. In order to follow an efficient deployment process and meet the mandated timeline, deployment will adhere to scheduled routes. While newly constructed homes and buildings will also get digital meters, any digital meters installed outside the scheduled areas will not have the communications infrastructure in place for fully "smart" functioning until meters are scheduled to be deployed for that area.



My smart meter has been installed - what happens now?

After an acceptance period of up to two months, you can get detailed information on your historic electric usage up to 24-48 hours before the current day down to 15-minute intervals by visiting www.SmartMeterTexas.com.* For usage before the installation of your smart meter, contact your Retail Electric Provider (REP). Check with CenterPoint Energy at 713-207-2222 or 1-800-332-7143 or contact your REP to learn when your smart meter is ready for the Smart Meter Texas portal. To register, you will need your meter number and ESI ID (electric service identifier), which are on your bill. You may contact the Smart Meter Texas help desk at 1-888-616-5859.

* The Smart Meter Texas Web site complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

What happens to the old meters?

The old meters are recycled. Any newer, electronic meters we replace (such as solid state meters and OMR – offsite meter read – meters) are refurbished, tested and recycled back into the meter population until smart meters are installed in the area in which they are recycled. The older, electromechanical (dial) meters we replace are dismantled and all their components – such as aluminum, copper, glass et cetera – recycled.

Why should I pay now for a meter I might not get for two years?

The smart meter is only part of this technology upgrade, which includes an entire system of smart meters, communications equipment and computer software. The cost of this technology upgrade will be shared by all customers, and the total cost per consumer remains the same regardless of when it is paid. Spreading the cost over several years lowers the cost per month.

All consumers of electricity stand to benefit from potential cost savings resulting from energy conservation encouraged by a smart metering system, even before they receive a smart meter and even if they themselves don't change their consumption habits. While smart meters can help you save money, you can save more than \$3 per month now by using energy efficiently. In fact, one compact fluorescent (CFL) light bulb can save you \$30* or more over the life of the bulb. For energy efficiency tips, visit CenterPointEnergy.com/EnergyInSight.

*Source: Energy Star.

Do I have to get a smart meter? My meter is working fine.

The Public Utility Commission of Texas has authorized deployment of smart meters across CenterPoint Energy's electric service territory. While the old meters may operate correctly, they do not provide consumers with the potentially energy- and money-saving insights into their electric consumption and other benefits that smart meters can provide. The highly accurate smart meters will also reduce the need for estimated meter readings.



Are smart meters accurate?

CenterPoint Energy takes the accuracy of its meters very seriously, which is why we have a rigorous testing and quality assurance process, including comparison testing of smart meters versus traditional meters, third party accuracy tests, and independent meter software reviews. Itron, the manufacturer of CenterPoint Energy's smart meter, tests all meters shipped to CenterPoint Energy plus sample tests meters after manufacture. CenterPoint Energy also randomly tests meters according to American National Standards Institute guidelines before they are installed.

On July 31, 2010, Navigant Consulting, an independent firm hired by the Public Utility Commission of Texas to test smart meters, reported their results to the PUC. At the PUC's request, Navigant performed the following tests for CenterPoint Energy and other Texas utilities during four months of investigation from February to June 2010:

- Independent testing of the accuracy of smart meters being deployed in Texas:
- Investigation of customer meter and billing complaints regarding smart meters
- Analysis of historical electricity use of customer with smart vs. traditional meters
- Evaluation of smart meter testing, deployment and provisioning processes and controls
- Evaluation of advanced metering infrastructure including controls to ensure that electricity usage is accurately communicated from the meter through billing

None of thousands of CenterPoint Energy meters was found to be inaccurate according to American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards of +/- 2%. One meter failed to meet CenterPoint Energy's more rigorous standard of +/- 0.5%.

For the full Navigant report visit www.CenterPointEnergy.com/EnergyInSight and click on Results of PUCT-request accuracy tests under Resources.

My bill went up after I got a smart meter. Is there a connection?

No. CenterPoint Energy delivers you electricity, but we don't sell it. Questions about rates and your bill should be directed to your Retail Electric Provider. However, our smart meters can help you better monitor your consumption of electricity. With an in-home energy display, which will be available at retail stores in a range of prices, or the Smart Meter Texas website, you'll no longer have to wait for your monthly electric bill to find out how much electricity you are using, which can take the surprise out of your bill and prompt you to conserve energy.

Many factors can contribute to increased consumption of electricity and higher bills:

- Temperature extremes (summer heat or winter cold) generally result in greater usage and higher bills. People with electric heat, such as many apartment dwellers, may use more electricity to stay warm during cold winters.

- In summer, air conditioning can account for two-thirds or more of electricity usage.
- Holiday lighting and other seasonal usage (e.g. pool pumps) 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.
- A higher electric rate could result in a higher bill even if you reduce consumption. Rates can be either fixed at a given price every month or variable, in which case they can fluctuate significantly. Check with your Retail Electric Provider about their rate plans or visit www.powertochoose.org to compare the rate plans of different providers.

If you are concerned about your electric bill, check your bill or call your Retail Electric Provider, which may provide information or services such as the following:

- The number of days in the billing cycle, which can vary from 28 to 35 days month to month; more billing days generally result in higher bills.
- A comparison (e.g. bar chart) of usage over a 13-month period.
- A comparison of the average daily temperature for the month in question with the preceding month and/or the same month of the preceding year (higher summer temperatures and lower winter temperatures can result in higher bills).
- Energy audits and analysis tools, energy efficiency programs and tips, energy assistance and/or payment plan options.

For energy-saving tips and programs, visit www.centerpointefficiency.com.

Are smart meters secure from hackers?

CenterPoint Energy applies security best practices to protect our information networks and the electric grid to maximize the security of our smart meter deployment, supported by the experience and expertise of our vendors, IBM, GE, and Itron. We maintain a comprehensive cyber security and risk mitigation program based on national standards followed by other leading companies in the energy, defense, and financial industries. While actively monitoring the security of our systems, we also employ multiple third party vendors to audit our security practices and test the protection of our systems on a regular basis.

CenterPoint Energy also appreciates consumer concerns about privacy. Energy usage data belongs to the consumer and can be shared only when authorized in writing by the customer or authorized by regulatory authorities as necessary to conduct business (such as for billing). CenterPoint Energy will continue to protect customer usage data as securely as we have always done.



Will the meter reader stop coming to my house?

After a meter acceptance period of up to two months, CenterPoint Energy will read your smart electric meter remotely, virtually eliminating the need to come to your house to read the electric meter. Electric service can also be connected and disconnected remotely for most homes, but CenterPoint Energy will continue to dispatch crews as needed to make on-site repairs. We also will continue to read natural gas meters.

Won't the savings on meter readers pay for the new meters?

There are some operational savings for CenterPoint Energy, but the surcharge approved by the Public Utility Commission of Texas, which covers not only smart meters but also the costs associated with the communications infrastructure and back-office computer systems, takes predicted operational savings into account.

If I have an offsite meter reading (OMR) meter, will it be replaced?

Smart meters, which provide greater benefits than OMR meters, will replace OMR meters. OMR meters use mobile radios and an early form of digital technology. Meter readers still have to walk or drive by the house to pick up the remote signal from the meter, and OMR meters do not give consumers detailed, on-demand usage information to encourage energy-saving changes that could save consumers money.

If I move, can I take the smart meter with me?

No, but smart meters will be installed in newly constructed homes and businesses even outside the areas scheduled for deployment at a given time. However, any digital meters installed outside the scheduled areas will not have the communications infrastructure in place for fully “smart” functioning until the scheduled smart meter installation period for that area.

Where do I get an in-home monitor? How much do they cost?

One of the major potential benefits of smart meters is their ability to give consumers access to detailed data on their electricity usage via an in-home monitor (up-to-the-minute) or the Smart Meter Texas Internet portal (with data from up to 24-48 hours before). 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. In addition, \$7.5 million has been allocated to provide qualified low-income consumers with access to monitors.

Will CenterPoint Energy provide assistance to low-income consumers?

Yes. In order for low-income consumers to be able to take advantage of some of the benefits of smart meters, CenterPoint Energy has committed to spend \$7.5 million. As part of this commitment, the company intends to provide low-income consumers, either directly or through a third party, an in-home device that will give these consumers the ability to directly monitor their electrical usage.

What is a Home Area Network?

A Home Area Network (or HAN) is “a network contained within a user’s home that connects a person’s digital devices, from multiple computers and their peripheral devices to telephones, VCRs, televisions, video games, home security systems, ‘smart’ appliances, fax machines and other digital devices that are wired into the network.”* Smart meters can interact with ZigBee-compatible HAN devices such as thermostats or other electric appliances to allow consumers to monitor and control them remotely.

Several appliance manufacturers have announced that they are adding HAN capabilities to smart appliances. There will also be devices that can be connected to existing appliances allowing for control of these appliances, such as HAN devices plugged into wall outlets for connecting and monitoring usage of window air conditioning units. CenterPoint Energy is testing devices made by several manufacturers, and we expect HAN technology and related products to grow fairly quickly as smart meters are deployed in large numbers.

*Source: Webopedia.

What is "demand response"?

So-called "demand response" programs encourage consumers to reduce or shift their electricity use (e.g. from afternoon to evening) in response to high electricity costs or the possibility of overloading the electric grid in times of high demand. Such programs, now available to commercial and industrial consumers, could be extended to residential and small business customers with smart meters. Through such **optional** programs, Retail Electric Providers could offer price incentives, payments or rebates to consumers for shifting or reducing their electricity consumption.