

# SMART METER FAQs

## **Why do we need smart meters?**

It's estimated that over the next twenty years, Ontario will need to refurbish, rebuild, replace, or conserve 25,000 megawatts (MW) worth of generating capacity at an estimated cost of \$70 billion. Producing more electricity is only part of the answer. Conservation and demand management will help us make the best use of our existing electricity resources and will slow our growth in demand in the province. There are tremendous opportunities to reduce the supply-demand gap through the wise use of electricity. Smart meters together with Time-of-Use prices will encourage all of us to think about how and when we use electricity.

## **Why is API installing smart meters?**

All local electricity distribution companies across Ontario including API are installing smart meters to in support of the Government of Ontario's program to build a culture of energy conservation in Ontario. After API installs your smart meter, there will not be any difference on your bill except the meter number will change. API will give you advance notice before you start being billed on Time-of-Use.

## **What is a smart meter and what does it look like?**

A smart meter looks like the meter you have now, except the display is digital and there are no dials. However, a smart meter is much more technologically advanced compared to your current, mechanical style meter. It can record how much electricity you use and when you use it (typically hourly), and it will communicate this information automatically via wireless technologies. In contrast, conventional electricity meters measure the total amount of electricity consumed over an entire billing period (typically one or two months) and most are read manually.

## **When will I get my smart meter?**

The Ontario government's target is to have smart meters installed in all Ontario homes and small businesses by 2010. API has over one eleven thousand meters to install in our 14,200 square kilometer service area. Most of our meters will be installed by the end of summer 2010. All of our meters will be installed by the end of 2010. Installers will leave a package at your door when your meter has been replaced.

## **Can I volunteer to get a smart meter now?**

To maximize the efficiency of the smart meter deployment across our service area, customers will not be able to select when they receive a smart meter.

**I don't want to have a smart meter installed. Can I refuse?**

No. The *Electricity Act* (Section 40) and API's Conditions of Service permit us to maintain and replace our meter at your premises.

**How long will the meter installation take?**

The installation generally takes less than ten minutes to complete.

**What are the hours for installation?**

In general, the hours for installation are from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. We may, from time to time, work on weekends.

**Will you be booking appointments for installation?**

No, unfortunately we will not be booking appointments, as we do not normally need to enter your home or business to replace the meter. If we need to enter your home or business to install the meter, and if you are not at home, we will contact you in the future when we are back in your community. This makes the process more efficient and helps to minimize costs to all customers.

**Is it possible to have an installation after hours or on weekends?**

Unfortunately, generally, no, but the installation really is a short procedure that will be done with little or no inconvenience to you.

**Do I have to be there for the smart meter installation?**

No, you don't have to be there for the installation to proceed and it takes only a few minutes to complete.

**Will my power be interrupted during the installation of my smart meter?**

Yes. The installation of your smart meter will require a very short power interruption (usually less than a minute). We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you and you will need to reset your electronic devices.

**How will I know if my meter's been replaced with a smart meter?**

We will leave a package at your door letting you know that we have completed the installation. Also, the meter will look a little different as it has a digital display and no dials.

**Will my first bill after the meter replacement look any different?**

No, it will look the same except you will have a new meter number. Additionally, there will not be any change to the amount or charges on your bill as a result of this meter exchange.

**How much am I paying for my smart meter now?**

We are in discussion with the Ontario Energy Board as to how API customers will be billed to recover smart meter-related costs. These costs must be approved by the Ontario Energy Board to be charged on your API bill.

**Will I see a separate smart meter charge on my bill?**

No. The cost of smart metering will be included in the delivery line item of your bill. Smart metering costs are recovered through electricity rates in the same way as costs are recovered for other equipment that serve our customers including distribution wires, poles and transformers.

**How much is the smart meter going to cost in the future?**

The Ontario Energy Board has estimated that the incremental monthly cost for a typical residential or small business customer may be between \$3 and \$4 per month once full implementation is complete in 2010 but this is just an estimate.

**Will my electricity bill automatically go down once I have a smart meter?**

No. Your smart meter is a tool that measures and records how much electricity you use at different times of the day. Later, when teamed with Time-of-Use prices, it will provide you the opportunity to better manage your electricity use (and costs), reduce strain on the electricity system, and help the environment.

**How do I know that my smart meter is accurate?**

All meters are approved by Measurement Canada and API regularly tests a sample of meters for accuracy before they are deployed.

**What are the cost savings and environmental benefits of smart meters?**

When we're all using a lot of electricity at the same time, we create "peak demand" periods. Supplying electricity at those times has a range of impacts. Higher demand often means higher prices because having generating plants that stand ready to meet peak demand and only operate infrequently is expensive and these plants are usually the less attractive forms of generation that are harder on the environment. By smoothing out the peaks in demand, we can reduce the amount Ontario needs to invest in additional power generating plants, transmission lines, and distribution facilities.

**Since my usage data will be sent automatically, will it remain secure and confidential?**

Yes, Ontario's electricity distributors are required by law to ensure that smart meters and associated communication networks are equipped with security features to prevent unauthorized access. We must

also comply with federal laws regarding the privacy, protection and disclosure of personal information. In addition, the only information communicated is your meter number and your electricity usage (the same information that was displayed on the old conventional meter at your premises).

#### **Can API access my property to change the meter?**

Yes, API may enter a customer's property at any time to replace the meter. This authority is granted under the *Electricity Act* (section 40) and also in our Conditions of Service (section 2.3.1 – Power of Entry).

#### **Can you explain how I can read my new smart meter?**

The display on the meter is now digital and will scroll through several numbers. Watch for it to read LSt003. The next number displayed will be your reading. It is six digits long and says kWh in the lower right-hand corner.

#### **I now have my smart meter installed but understand that I cannot manage my bill by adjusting my consumption until I am converted to TOU pricing?**

While it's true you are not being billed at TOU prices at the present time, you can start reducing your electricity consumption right now by following some or all of the examples below. A more extensive list is available at [www.PowerSaver.ca](http://www.PowerSaver.ca).

- Replace your incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs which use 75% less power and last much longer.
- Always use the economy cycle on your dishwasher and also use the air dry setting.
- Install an energy-saving showerhead which can reduce your hot water use by up to 30%.
- Install faucet aerators on your sink faucets to lower water flow. Aerators mix air into the water flow and reduce water consumption by 25-50% per tap.
- Caulk, weather-strip, and insulate your home. Seal the leaks and cracks in your house, and you'll raise the humidity levels and have a more comfortable indoor environment. You'll be able to turn the furnace down which means a lower heating bill.

#### **I understand that smart meters use radio frequency communication. Is this safe?**

Yes. API's smart metering system makes use of low power radio frequency (RF) transmitters to communicate meter readings and weak RF fields in the range of 900 Mhz are produced during the system's normal operation. These fields comply with Health Canada guidelines with respect to limits for exposure to RF fields.

#### **How do smart meter RF emissions compare to other RF sources in my home?**

Because of the weak fields produced by API's smart metering system, it is likely that RF exposure of most individuals will be predominated by other RF sources in the home such as cordless phones, wireless routers, and microwave ovens.

#### **How can I find out more about Health Canada RF emission guidelines?**

To find out more about Health Canada guidelines, visit the [Health Canada website](#), contact them at 613-954-6699, or email [ccrpb-pcrpcc@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:ccrpb-pcrpcc@hc-sc.gc.ca).