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WND EXCLUSIVE

SMART METERS TURN INCENDIARY

Create combustible combination when attached to homes

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***Editor's Note:** This is the second article in series about smart meters and the technology that critics fear could allow utilities and government to monitor how and for what reason energy is used inside your home. The first article explained the "other purposes" government has for the technology.*

For all the benefits touted by smart meter proponents, there are some disturbing facts surfacing about their installation and use.

Concerns with smart meters run the gamut from cost and security to safety, health and privacy risks. The potential danger to the physical health of a homeowner has drawn a lot of attention recently.

Smart-meter installations have been associated with several fires in British Columbia in the last few years. In August, fire crews were called to a home in Coquitlam, B.C., over problems with the utility company's meter. The incident came the day after another house in the area burned down following the installation of a smart meter.

According to CBC News, Bill Strain, a Surrey, B.C., electrical contractor, said that there can be problems if the mounting plate the meter fits into is old or damaged.

"If moisture entered into the [meter base], there could be corrosion, rusting or any number of things," he said.

The problems with smart meters in Canada are known well outside of British Columbia. A report issued from the Ontario Fire Marshall's office stated "initial research [showed] an unusual amount of fire incidents involving smart meters."

The report went on to state, “Anecdotal information supported problems occurred after the old analog meters were updated to the new digital smart meters.”

Baltimore Gas and Electric Co. also reported five cases of overheating meters in hearings before the Maryland Public Service Commission.

Both Commonwealth Edison and Peco Energy Company found in preliminary investigations that overheating was caused not by the meters themselves but by problems with wiring in the homes. That has led Peco to install software that will shut off meters automatically and sound an alarm if they overheat. ComEd says it cannot do the same thing because its meters are made by a different company.

Even though it said it has seen no evidence of faulty design with its GE-made meters, ComEd now is performing daily “temperature scans” on its installed smart meters, allowing it to identify “heat-related issues” and address them before they become problems.

A proposed opt-out program for ComEd customers has largely become moot since the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) agreed to allow ComEd to delay the implementation of the smart meter program until 2015 due to the commission’s cut in funding for the project.

While the utility companies have found that any reported fires associated with smart meters are not the fault of the meters themselves, evidence keeps popping up that there are issues with the devices.

Peco Energy Company, also owned by Commonwealth Edison, reported a fire in Bucks County, Pa., that has also been attributed to a smart meter malfunction. The fire led Peco to halt installation of the meters while it investigates the cause of this and 28 other reports of the devices overheating and catching fire.

The Philadelphia Inquirer also noted that the Peco has quietly stopped referring to the devices as “smart meters.” After noting that a mailing to customers left out the term altogether, an AP report quoted Peco spokeswoman Cathy Engel Menendez as saying: “We did spend a lot of time talking to customers before we rolled out the project and found that the term ‘smart meter’ really seemed to mean something different to everyone.”



WXYZ-TV in Detroit reported that Bonnie and Owen Medd of Ann Arbor, Mich., never had a problem with their electric meter until DTE Energy replaced it with smart meter. After the meter was installed, it exploded.

“The DTE man told me we were very lucky our house didn’t go up in flames,” said Bonnie.

However, DTE officials said the problem lay with the old wiring in their home built only 10 years ago, rather than the meter.

An opt-out program for customers has been proposed, subject to approval, by the Michigan Public Service Commission.

The WXYZ report also found similar incidents of fires across the country. Sister station WPTV in West Palm Beach, Fla., has covered several fires linked in part to smart meters.

The evidence of smart meters being a fire hazard keeps mounting.

Elizabeth Copeland-White in DeKalb County, Ga., reported that a smart meter exploded and caught fire to her home, causing \$11,000 worth of damage. (See [the evidence](#))



In Chicago, smart meters were identified as being the cause of several fires in suburban homes in which Commonwealth Edison installed the devices. Other smart meters were found to overheat severely while in service.

“ComEd has experienced three smart meter events that resulted in damage to metering equipment and to the immediate area around the meter due to small fires,” the utility said in a statement responding to questions from Crain’s Chicago Business.

In July, a Houston woman blamed a smart meter for a fire that devastated her home. KHOU-TV news received a document that appears to be from the Houston Fire Department that stated that the source of the fire was from “an unspecified electrical malfunction in the electrical meter.”

Norman Lambe, a California-based Insurance adjuster, believes there is a problem with the meters.

“For myself, as an adjuster, I believe the smart meters are a real threat to the safety of your home, business and property. I have personally worked two large homeowner fires in which the smart

meters were determined as responsible. Also, they have been responsible for several small fires in which appliances and computers have been destroyed.”

As evidence of the potential health and fire dangers from smart meters keep mounting, there are calls for utility companies to implement an opt-in smart meter program rather than an opt-out.

For Bonnie Medd, being charged for an opt-out program is unfair.

“For me to pay to have peace of mind is wrong,” she said.

See Part 1, “Watching out for government’s ‘other purposes’”