



*You may have heard information recently about advanced meters—sometimes referred to as smart meters. Many electric and water utilities, including SPU’s locally owned municipal utility, are making use of this technology. Wondering what this industry shift means for you here in Sun Prairie? Read on for answers to some frequently asked questions.*

## **Q. Is Sun Prairie Utilities using advanced meters?**

**A.** Yes. Following several years of careful research and consideration, the Sun Prairie Utilities Commission approved a plan to transition to advanced electric and water meters. Sun Prairie’s not-for-profit, locally owned utility is making use of advanced metering as an important tool for the business of operating our community’s electric and water systems.

## **Q. How do advanced meters work?**

**A.** Advanced meters use a safe, secure and effective two-way communications link that will allow our utilities to provide proactive customer service, improve system reliability, and operate more efficiently.

## **Q. Why are these new meters being installed?**

**A.** Advanced meters are an important tool for the business of operating our community’s electric and water systems. They will help our utility to operate more cost-effectively and to provide more proactive and reliable service to our customers.

## **Q. Will my utility rates go up as a result of advanced metering?**

**A.** No. Our use of advanced meters is not anticipated to have any impact on electric or water rates. In fact, this new technology will help bring important savings to our community.

## **Q. How can advanced meters provide savings?**

**A.** Sun Prairie Utilities’ use of advanced meters will help us operate more cost-effectively for customers. The utility currently meters 15,400 electric services and 10,200 water services, and our old system requires sending workers out in trucks and on foot to complete monthly readings, conduct regular testing, and perform disconnections and reconnections for these meters. Because advanced meters allow these functions to be carried out remotely, Sun Prairie Utilities’ new metering system will eliminate nearly all of these expenses.

In addition, the use of advanced meters can more quickly alert us to problems that drive up costs for our utilities and our customers. We will be able to more quickly alert customers to costly water leaks, and advanced meters also allow faster detection of instances of theft and meter tampering, which are dangerous and costly for our system. In the future, advanced meter data will enable our customers to analyze their electric and water consumption and take advantage of demand-response programs that will provide customers with more control over their usage and bills.

## **Q. What has Sun Prairie Utilities done to help keep down the costs of this initiative?**

**A.** Competitive financing, with a low interest rate, has been obtained for this initiative. In addition, our community is saving significantly by joining with the 50 other locally owned, not-for-profit utilities served by our power supplier, WPPI Energy. WPPI Energy’s members are working together to cost-effectively share data management systems, expertise, support and licensing for our advanced metering software and systems.

## **Q. How will advanced meters improve my utility service?**

**A.** Advanced metering will enable our staff to provide proactive customer service. Advanced metering allows faster detection of service related problems such as electric outages, power quality issues, water leaks, and potential sources of water cross-contamination. Transitioning to the new meters also helps ensure that our electric and water systems will stay in good working order for the years to come.

## **Q. Will my privacy be compromised?**

**A.** No. As always, our utilities take seriously our obligation to protect your privacy. That will not change with the use of advanced meters.

## **Q. What assurance do I have that my privacy is protected?**

**A.** Utilities in our state are required to strictly protect your customer usage and billing information, and Sun Prairie Utilities works constantly to safeguard this data.

## **Q. Will the advanced meter make it possible to know what I'm doing inside my home?**

**A.** No. The only information collected by an advanced meter is how much energy and water is consumed based on time of day, not how the energy or water was used. Advanced metering cannot detect the presence of people in their homes, nor can it collect information about customers' personal activities or private lives.

Simply put, the information collected by an advanced meter will be used for the same purpose as the data from the old meters: measuring consumption and preparing a bill.

## **Q. What if I don't want advanced meters at my home or business.**

**A.** Sun Prairie Utilities has filed a Non-Standard Service Meter (non-advanced meter) tariff with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW). Efficiencies and cost savings achieved are highest when all meters are advanced meters. Customers may choose to not have an advanced meter. SPU will need to manually read and process any Non-Standard Service Meter and the PSCW has approved a rate of \$17 per month to cover all manual processes for a Non-Standard Service Meter account. Customers choosing to have a Non-Standard Service Meter will be charged the \$17 per month.

## **Q. Are advanced meters safe?**

**A.** Yes. While wireless advanced meters have become the subject of considerable attention for their use of low-level radio frequencies (RF), in-depth review of the scientific literature by the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that the small amount of RF energy produced by smart meters is not harmful to human health. (1)

In the US, the FCC establishes the requirements for use of the RF spectrum and acceptable exposure limits for the public. Sun Prairie Utilities' advanced meters, which are manufactured by Elster, comply with and are far below these requirements, as well as international requirements set by global bodies.

Sun Prairie Utilities takes your health and safety seriously and would never install equipment that would jeopardize our relationship with you. The safety and well-being of our customers is our community-owned utility's top priority.

1 World Health Organization. <http://www.who.int/peh-emf/about/WhatisEMF/en/index1.html>.

## Q. How significant is the RF signal from an advanced meter?

**A.** The low level of RF emissions associated with advanced meters is far smaller than that of other common household items. (2) In fact, everyday devices such as cellular phones and microwave ovens typically cause far greater RF exposure than advanced meters. (3) In terms of RF output, Sun Prairie Utilities' advanced meters typically compare as follows to other common household wireless devices: (4)



2 Environmental Defense Fund. <http://www.who.int/peh-emf/about/WhatIsEMF/en/index1.html>.

3 Richard A. Tell, Richard Tell Associates, Inc. (April 6, 2005).

4 Based on FCC 47CFR1 . 1310, which averages exposure over 30 minutes of usage. Comparative data provided by Elster.

Furthermore, RF exposure decreases with distance from the device. Sun Prairie Utilities' advanced meters are typically installed on the exterior of a building, whereas much higher-emitting devices such as microwaves and mobile phones are often operated a few inches or a few feet from the user. In addition, while other common household devices emit RF signals far more frequently, or even constantly, Sun Prairie Utilities' advanced meters typically will only transmit a signal four times per day, and each transmission lasts for approximately one second.

## Q. What if I have questions or want more information?

**A.** Our community-owned utility is committed to keeping you informed about this important initiative. We will provide regular updates at utility commission meetings, and customer questions are always welcome. Please monitor project updates on our website or contact our utility staff at (608) 837-5500.

## Q. What is the timeframe for Sun Prairie's advanced metering initiative?

**A.** Following several years of careful research and consideration, the Sun Prairie Utilities Commission approved in the 2017 SPU Capital Budget to transition to the use of advanced electric and water metering over the next 4 years, 2017-2020.