

Frequently Asked Questions about Digital Meters

Your Socorro Electric Cooperative is investing in new, digital meters to improve the efficiency and reliability of our electric system. Many members have asked questions about these new meters and how they work. Here are the most common questions we have received -- and answers:

Will I lose electrical service during the installation?

Yes, for a few minutes. You will need to reset electronic clocks and other devices.

How does my new automated meter work?

With these new meters, Your Socorro Electric Cooperative can read the meter remotely from our office. Information from the meter is transmitted back to the co-op in hourly increments. Transmitting this information electronically means that a meter reader no longer comes to your house except annually to verify readings.

Why are we changing to the automated meters?

The meter upgrade provides you the member with numerous benefits. The new meters will help us

- Save money by eliminating the labor and transportation costs of in-person meter reading— a savings we pass on to our members
- Improve billing accuracy by eliminating misreads or estimated bills
- Help our consumer-member troubleshoot high-bill problems by providing information about power consumption patterns, outage and blink count history and voltage information, reducing usage questions
- Help secure the overall safety of the cooperative employee team

What other additional installation parts will I need?

No additional parts are anticipated or required. However, if something is identified as faulty or hazardous with member's equipment, you will be responsible for replacing it.

Do members have a choice in getting a new meter?

No, new meters will be installed at all active locations. The cooperative is embarking on a system-wide program that will change 100 percent of existing residential and commercial meters in order to acquire more accurate information.

At this time, if members have a question about their energy usage, the cooperative must send operation personnel to the member/owner's property to re-read the meter.

With the new system, customer service representatives can access the meter information and obtain the reading almost instantaneously.

The new system will give the cooperative hourly meter readings, instead of monthly readings. Other features of the new system will provide new data that will enable us to monitor the system better and correct inefficiencies.

What's the difference between the new meters and the old meters?

The new meters are digital electronic devices while the old meters were an electro-mechanical device. In most cases the new meters are the same as the old meters, just with updated communication technology. The co-op only has a small number of mechanical meters still in use.

Will meter readers ever need to come to read the meter manually again once the new meter is in place?

Yes, a meter reader will come out to your home once a year to obtain a physical reading.

If the co-op experiences a communication error with your meter, a meter tech may have to troubleshoot the issue on site.

What information does the new meter record?

The new meter records an electronic kWh reading, the date and hourly energy usage, the overall peak demand of the electric account and the number of times the meter has experienced a loss of power for any reason.

What day of the month will the meters be read?

All of the co-op's new meters can be read at a variety of times to obtain a history of account information. However, for billing purposes member bills will be read on monthly schedules.

Once co-op employees no longer need to read the meter, can obstacles be constructed that may make the meter inaccessible?

No, reasonable access to the co-op's equipment still must be maintained. This allows for cooperative personnel to either read or maintain the meter if necessary at reasonable times or in case of an emergency.

How will the co-op read the meters?

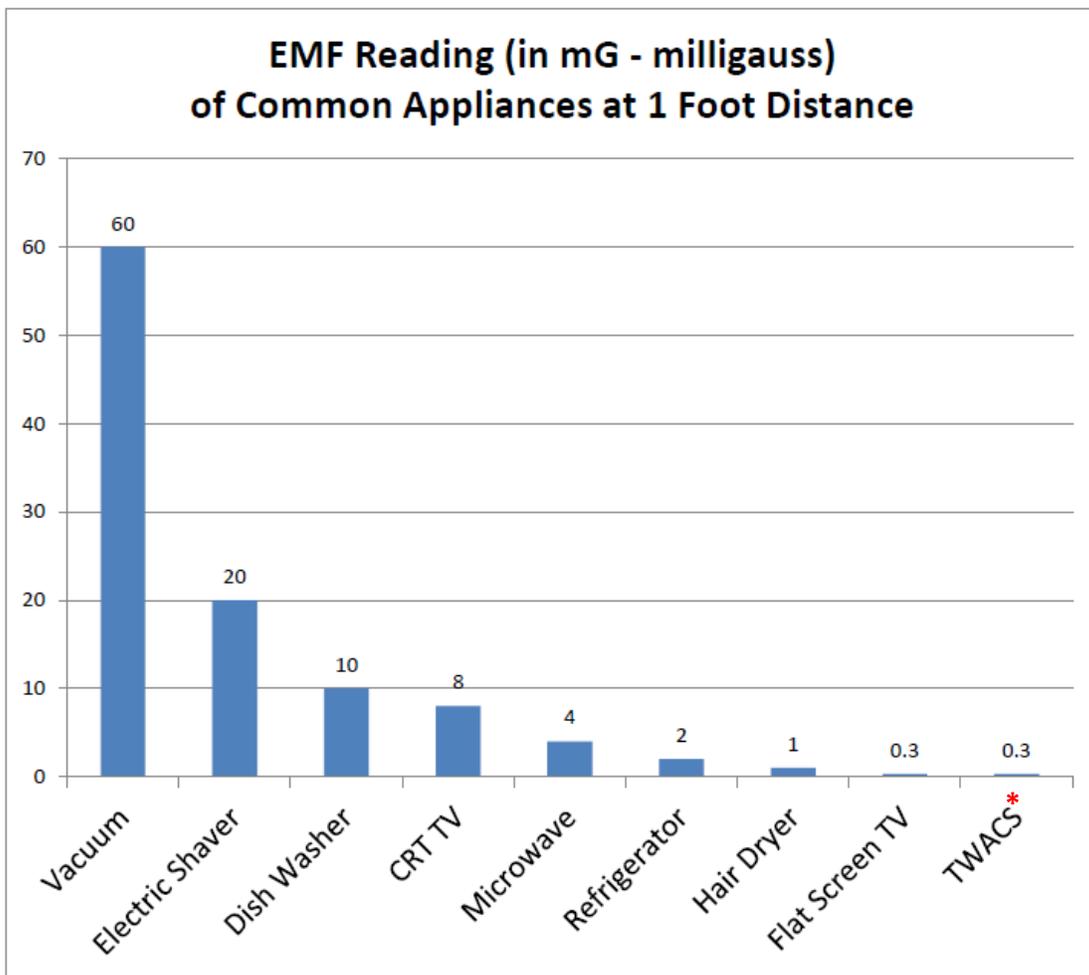
The cooperative's computer will communicate with the substation-installed equipment, which sends a request for one or more meter readings. The meter reading is sent back to the co-op via a secure network.

Will the co-op continue to do service inspections?

Routine inspections of all meters and services will continue in order to look for safety hazards, theft or other problems.

Are there any potential health impacts from a meter that can receive and send data?

NO, research conducted by the Electric Power Research Institute, the Utilities Telecom Council and others has revealed **no health impacts from digital meters**. The radio frequencies emitted by digital meters falls well below the maximum recommended in federal guidelines. A digital meter equipped to send and receive data has an RF density hundreds of times less than the RF density of a cell phones – and the meters are installed on the outside of your house not next to your ear!



*TWACS-(Two-Way Automated Communication System) TWACS utilizes existing power lines to transmit readings from meters to the utility substation and then back to the utility for processing. This is done via a TWACS module within the new digital meter.