



## Frequently Asked Questions about Digital Meters

*Your* Socorro Electric Cooperative, Inc. (SEC) 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 power during the installation?**

Yes, but just for a few minutes. You will need to reset electronic clocks and other devices after the installation is complete.

### **Why are we changing to the digital meters?**

The meter upgrade provides you the Member with numerous benefits by helping SEC:

- save money by reducing the labor and transportation costs of monthly in-person meter reading— a savings we pass on to our Members.
- improve billing accuracy by eliminating misreads or estimated bills.
- help our Members troubleshoot high-bill questions by providing information about power consumption patterns, outages and voltage information. The new system will give the cooperative hourly meter readings, in addition to monthly readings.
- promote the overall safety of the cooperative employee team.
- provide our Member Service Representatives with real-time accessibility to the meter information to aid in answering your questions about your energy usage.
- monitor the health of our overall electric system better.

### **Do Members have a choice in getting a new digital meter?**

No, new meters will be installed at all active locations. SEC is embarking on a system-wide program that will change 100% of existing residential and commercial meters.

### **How does my new digital meter work?**

Information from the meter is transmitted back to SEC over our power lines. Transmitting this information electronically means that a meter reader no longer comes to your house except annually to verify readings.

### **How will the SEC read the meters?**

SEC's computer will communicate with the substation-installed equipment, which collects the meter readings. The information is then sent back to SEC via a secure network over our existing power lines.

### **What day of the month will the meters be read?**

The new meters can be read at any time to obtain a history of account information. However, for billing purposes, the meters will be read on monthly schedules.

### **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. Also, if the SEC experiences a communication error with your meter, a meter tech may have to troubleshoot the issue on site. So reasonable access to SEC's equipment still must be maintained. This allows SEC personnel to either read or maintain the meter if necessary at reasonable times or in case of an emergency.

### **Will SEC continue to do service inspections?**

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

### **What other additional equipment will I need?**

No additional equipment is required. However, if something is identified as faulty or hazardous with your equipment, you will be responsible for replacing it.

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

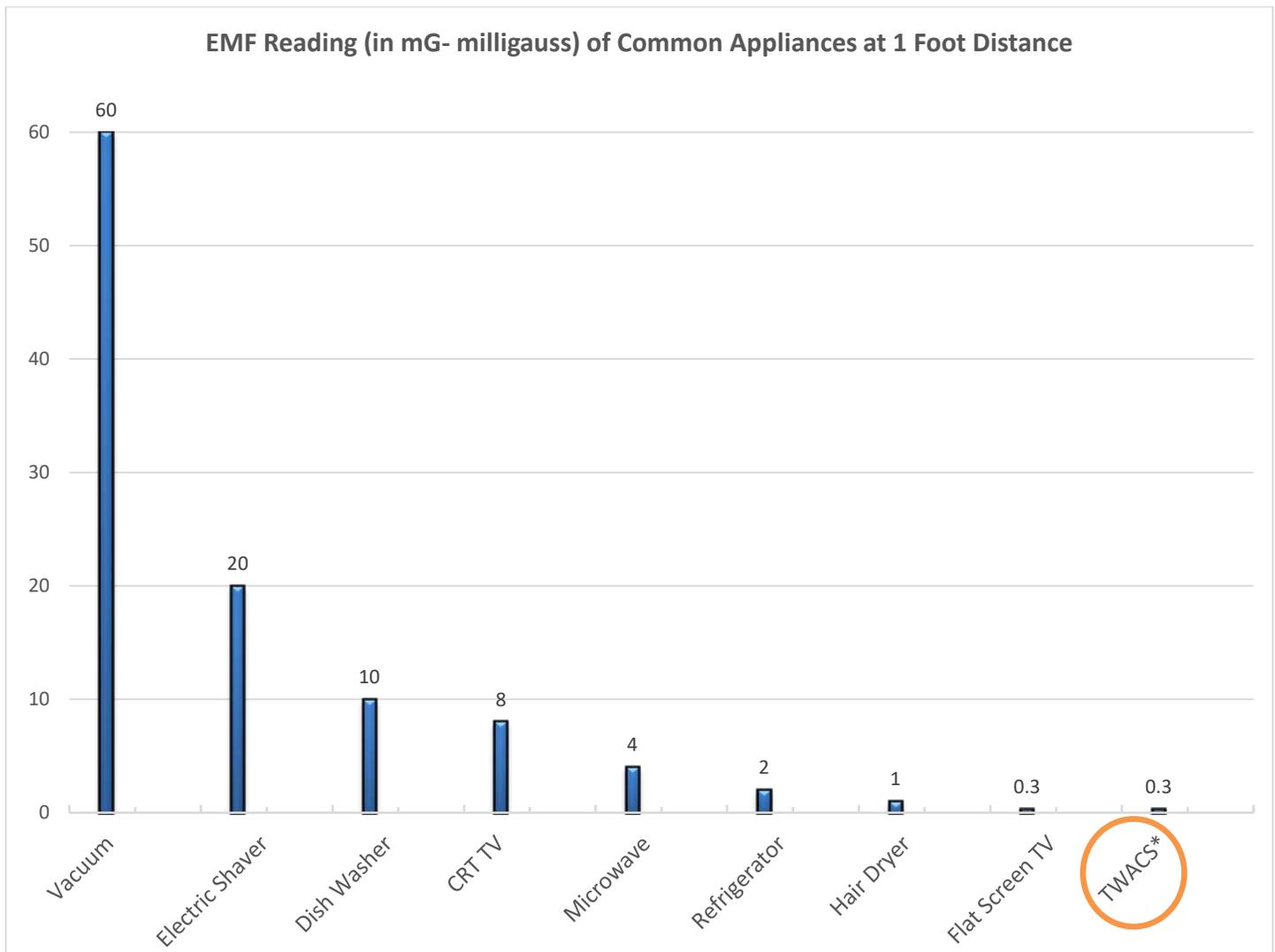
The new meters are digital electronic devices while the old meters were an electro- mechanical device. In most cases the new meters are the same as the old meters, just with updated communication technology.

### 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.

### Are there any potential health impacts from this type of meter that SEC is installing?

**NO.** Research conducted by the Electric Power Research Institute, the Utilities Telecom Council and others has revealed **no health impacts from digital meters.** The electromagnetic field (EMF) emitted by digital meters falls well below the maximum recommended level found in federal guidelines. A digital meter equipped to send and receive data has an EMF density hundreds of times less than the EMF density of a cell phones – and the meters are installed on the outside of your house not next to your ear! See graph below for the EMF levels of typical household appliances and the new digital meters.



\*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.