

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT ADVANCED METERING IN CEDARBURG

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

Q. Is Cedarburg Light & Water using advanced meters?

A. Yes. Following months of careful research and consideration, Light & Water’s Commission approved a plan to transition to advanced electric and water meters. We are making use of advanced metering as an important tool for the business of operating our community’s electric and water systems.

Q. What is the timeline for Cedarburg’s advanced meter replacement project?

A. L&W’s advanced meter replacement project is expected to proceed as follows:

- **May 2017** – Installation of new electric meters begin
- **Fall 2017** – Installation of new water meters begin
- **December 2018** – Electric meter installations completed
- **September 2019** – Water meter installations completed

Q. How will I be notified and what will you be doing?

A. For Electric Meters - We will send a letter to you approximately two weeks prior to the crews beginning the replacement of electric meters, to let you know when we will be in your neighborhood. There is no need for you to be home while we perform this work, and in most cases there will be a short (1-2 minute) outage while the meter is being replaced.

For Water Meters - We will send you a separate letter to schedule a time when we can change out the water meter, located in your basement. For meters installed within the last six years, we will also need to schedule a time to activate the remote reading function of your current water meter by adding a small transmitter.

Q. What changes will I see when my new meter is installed?

A. You will probably not notice any change, but once your advanced meter is installed, your usage data will be transmitted securely and efficiently to L&W.

Q. How do advanced meters work?

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

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Q. Why are these new meters being installed?

A. Advanced metering technology improves our ability to conduct the business of operating our community's electric and water systems. It will also help our utility to operate more efficiently and to provide more proactive and reliable service to our customers.

Q. How are advanced meters more efficient?

A. We currently send meter readers out in trucks and on foot to complete monthly readings for 6,200 electric customers and 4,000 water customers. Advanced meters will allow us to read meters remotely. In addition, the use of advanced meters can more quickly alert us to problems that drive up costs for the utility and our customers such as water leaks.

Q. What has L&W done to help keep down the cost of this project?

A. No debt was incurred to finance this project. The entire cost of the program was integrated into our budgeted capital outlay over a two year period. In addition, our community is saving significantly by joining with 50 other locally owned, not-for-profit utilities served by our power supplier, WPPI Energy. Together we are working 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 and water leaks. Transitioning to the new meters also helps ensure that our electric and water systems will stay in good working order for years to come.

Q. How often will you "read" my meter and how long will the meter be transmitting each time?

A. The plan is to have the electric and water meters transmit data every 4-hours, with the transmission lasting 3-5 seconds. Water meters will transmit to a nearby electric meter and the electric meter will send both water and electric usage data to the utility.

Q. Are advanced meters safe?

A. Yes. While wireless advanced meters use low-level radio frequencies (RF) to transmit data, numerous reports and industry group findings show that smart meter technology is very safe. Current Federal Communications Commission (FCC) standards provide an acceptable factor of safety against the health impacts of existing common household electronic devices and smart meters.

L&W's advanced meters, manufactured by Elster and Sensus, comply with and exceed these requirements. We take your health and safety seriously and would never install equipment that would jeopardize our relationship with you. The well-being of our customers is our top priority!

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.¹ In fact, everyday devices such as cellular phones and microwave ovens typically cause far greater RF

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exposure than advanced meters.² In terms of RF output, we have provided a comparison of L&W's advanced meters to other common household wireless devices:³

Smart Meter
900 MHz radio



Baby Monitor
7x greater



Wii Remote Controller
30x greater



Nintendo DS with WiFi
180x greater



WiFi Access Point
400x greater



Cordless Phone
1,000x greater



Cell Phone
1,000 – 10,000x greater



Furthermore, RF exposure decreases with distance from the device. L&W's advanced meters are typically installed on the exterior of a building or in the basement, 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, L&W's advanced meters typically will only transmit a signal every four hours, and each transmission only lasts for seconds.

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

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

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

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

A. We are committed to keeping you informed about this project. We will provide regular updates at utility commission meetings, and customer questions are always welcome. Please contact our staff at 262-375-7650.

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