



Frequently Asked Questions about Automated Meters

North Georgia EMC is installing new, automated meters to improve the efficiency and reliability of our electric system. Many members may have questions about these new meters and how they work. Here are answers to commonly asked questions about Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI):

When will my meter be installed?

Installations of meters are scheduled based on meter routes and will take place in phases over the next 24 months. The first installations will begin in January in Whitfield County.

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

Currently on our system, we have a combination of electro-mechanical meters along with digital meters that can be read from the road. Both of these meter types record kilowatt usage readings. But to capture these readings, we must send a meter-reader or a technician to the site. The major difference between these meters and the ones we are now installing is that the old meters could only measure kilowatt hour (kWh) consumption. The new meters can also store the kWh consumption data and then securely transmit it back to the cooperative's central office, eliminating the need to drive to each location to obtain meter readings monthly. Readings will be displayed in a digital format on the face of the new meters.

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. With the aid of other automatic devices being installed along our distribution lines, we will also be able to monitor and regulate the distribution voltage across our entire service area.

How does my new automated meter work?

With these new meters, North Georgia EMC can read the meter electronically from our central office, rather than driving to each meter each month. Information is secured and encrypted then sent back to the co-op by radio frequency. Transmitting this information electronically means that a meter reader no longer comes to your house.

What information does the new meter record?

The new meter records kWh usage just like the old meter. In addition, the new meter will record the overall peak demand of the electric account and the number of times the meter has experienced a loss of power for any reason. The meter will record the date, time, and the length of any power outages.

Why are we changing to the automated meters?

The meter upgrade provides numerous benefits. The new meters will help us:

- Save money by eliminating the labor and transportation costs of in-person meter reading.
- Pinpoint the exact location of outages more quickly.
- Help our consumer-member troubleshoot high-bill problems by providing information about power consumption.
- Monitor readings important for system operation and power quality maintenance.
- Connect and disconnect meters remotely, further reducing operational costs and promoting more efficiency.
- Safeguard against energy theft and tampering.

Who will be changing out the meters?

North Georgia EMC employees and Apex Covantage, LLC, a NGEMC licensed contractor will be changing out the meters. These employees and contractors will be in uniform and will have a photo identification card. ***Please note our field employees or contractors will not request to enter your home and you will not be asked for any personal information.*** If you have any questions or concerns regarding the identity of anyone claiming to represent NGEMC, please call one of our local offices for verification.

Do I need to be home when the meter is changed?

No, you do not have to be present during the meter change.

Will I lose electrical service during the installation?

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

Do members have a choice in getting a new meter?

New meters will be installed on all accounts to eliminate monthly manual meter reading and 500,000 miles of travel throughout the system each year. Other reasons for the system change are addressed in the *Why Are We Changing to Automated Meters* question above.

Will I keep the same rate after the conversion?

Yes, members will continue to stay on the same rate class as they have in the past.

What if my bill reports more kWh usage than normal or I think my meter is not working correctly?

Contact your nearest co-op office right away to discuss your billing concerns. The new meters installed have been tested and meet American National Standards Institute (ANSI) regulations.

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

Meter readers will no longer travel to every meter for a monthly read. All meter reads will be digitally transmitted back to the co-op headquarters. However, utility personnel will still need access to the meter for routine maintenance or repairs. And the meters will be periodically read manually for test purposes.

What day of the month will the meters be read?

Your new meter will retain the same billing cycle as your old meter, meaning that the reading date, billing date, and due date will not change from what you have been accustomed.

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 equipment still must be maintained. This allows for cooperative personnel to access the meter for routine maintenance or repairs and to disconnect meters in case of emergencies.

How will the co-op read the meters?

The cooperative will communicate with the meter over a secure radio frequency network, once daily under normal circumstances.

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 radio frequencies emitted by digital meters. The technology meets all federal guidelines.

A digital meter equipped to send and receive data has an energy level hundreds of times less than the energy level of cell phones – and the meters are installed on the outside of your house not next to your ear!

Also, contrary to some misconceptions, the new meters emit radio frequencies (RF) only when responding to a request for data from the co-op office. This communication takes a few seconds and is performed nightly. Compare this activity to a laptop with a wireless connection, which is constantly sending and retrieving data.

Will the co-op continue to do service inspections?

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

How secure will the new meters be?

The meter is sealed and the display is visible for members to be able to check their consumption. All reading data that is transmitted to the cooperative's control center is

encrypted and secure, and it is subject to the same privacy laws and confidentiality policies as all other member information. Our goal is to upgrade our electric distribution system to make it safer, more secure, and more reliable. Your new digital meter is part of this effort.

Can the cooperative disconnect and re-connect electric service using the new meters?

Yes, the meters have these capabilities.

Will the new meter notify the co-op when the power goes out? Yes, the meters will be able to record and report outages. The meters can also help our dispatchers determine if the member has a problem with the main breaker in the member's switchbox.