

# Energy Smart Community FAQs

## Information about smart meters

- [What is a smart meter?](#)

A smart meter is a natural gas and/or electric meter with two-way communications between the meter and our systems. The smart meter will transmit usage and meter status data to NYSEG. This will ensure your monthly bills are based on actual usage. More than 65 million smart meters have been installed across the U.S.
- [What are the benefits of smart meters?](#)

Smart meters provide many benefits. They allow us to pinpoint outages and respond faster, which means better service to you. You can access up-to-date usage information to track, manage, and control your own energy use. We will use actual electronic meter reads to determine usage every month – no more estimates. If you are moving to a new location or starting or stopping your electric service, you will see faster turnaround in making those changes to your account. There are environmental benefits, too! We're reducing the number of vehicles on the road by thousands of miles per year, reducing fossil fuels and carbon dioxide emissions.
- [When will I get my smart meter?](#)

Smart meter installations began in July. You will receive a postcard approximately one to two weeks before your scheduled smart meter installation.
- [Once the meters are installed, how long will it be before I start to see the benefits?](#)

Once all meters are installed, we can begin working to integrate the technology with our billing and outage management system. We expect that process to take several months.
- [How will I know my smart meter has been installed?](#)

We will leave a notice on your door the day we install your new meter.
- [Do I have to be home when my smart meter is installed?](#)

If we can access both your electric and natural gas meters, you do not need to be present to have your meter installed. If we are unable to access the meters, we will leave contact information at the time of our visit so you can call and schedule a convenient appointment time.
- [Can I choose to opt out or defer my installation?](#)

Yes, as part of the Energy Smart Community you will be able to opt out of receiving a smart meter at no additional cost during the term of this project. If you choose to opt out, you will not be eligible for our enhanced services such as daily usage monitoring and the new pricing plans that will offer you an opportunity to save. We expect to expand this program to all customers in our service area over the next few years, pending approval by state regulators. Opt out charges for statewide deployment of smart meters will be determined at a later date. Please call us at 1.800.925.1559 to speak with a customer service representative about opting out.
- [How do I read my smart meter?](#)

Smart meters have easy-to-read digital displays, instead of dials, and automatically cycle through a series of numbers. The information displayed will vary depending on the service classification for your account (this is listed on your bill). In the future, the displays for the different service classifications will be posted on [nyseg.com/EnergySmartCommunity](http://nyseg.com/EnergySmartCommunity).
- [Will a smart meter save me money?](#)

A smart meter records your energy usage in smaller time increments (typically one hour), you will be able to monitor your consumption more precisely so you can make more informed energy choices. Based on your usage, you can then choose an innovative electric pricing plan that works best for your household, which could lower your monthly cost. New pricing plans are currently being developed and will be available soon.
- [Who will receive smart meters?](#)

We plan to install approximately 12,400 electric and 7,300 natural gas smart meters in Tompkins County as part of the Energy Smart Community Program. We expect to expand this program to all customers in our service territory over the next few years.

- [What happens to my old meter?](#)  
After replacement, all meters will be retired and sent to a recycler for environmentally safe disposal.
- [Will my power go out when my meter is being exchanged?](#)  
Depending on the type of service or meter enclosure you have, you may have a brief power outage of five minutes or less. This could temporarily affect your devices such as alarm systems, automatic garage doors and clocks that do not have battery backups.
- [Doesn't the smart meter use electricity to send and transmit data? Won't this increase my bill?](#)  
Your bill will not increase as a result of the transmission of information to us. That energy use is not recorded on your meter.
- [How long is the energy data kept?](#)  
We will keep data for 6 years.

## Understanding Usage

- [How do I access information regarding my energy usage online?](#)  
Powered by your smart meter, our online Energy Manager is a tool that we are developing and will allow you to see how you use electricity hour by hour, day by day. This will assist you in understanding when you use energy, and tracking your usage. Once all smart meters are installed, we can begin the work on integrating smart meter enabled products such as Energy Manager.
- [I don't have access to a smart phone or computer, how can I gain access to my smart meter data?](#)  
Everyone in the ESC will receive a report by mail on a quarterly basis (4 times per year), with details regarding usage and tips to manage usage. In addition, monthly usage will be displayed on monthly bills. If you have access to a public computer you can access your data anytime through your secure login.
- [How does a smart meter help me save money on my bill?](#)  
Recent research demonstrates that giving consumers better information about their energy use in combination with tips on conservation, and energy efficiency can help them reduce their use.
- [Are there different rate plans for customers who want to manage their energy use to lower "off-peak" periods?](#)  
We are currently developing new pricing options such as "off-peak" discounts for customers.
- [How can I take advantage of innovative pricing plans when I'm home or away?](#)  
Innovative pricing plans will allow you to make simple changes and save. Time of use pricing will offer lower rates for off-peak usage. Take some additional energy efficiency measures and you could reduce your overall energy usage and costs.
  - Place timers on electric water heaters so water is only heated during off-peak hours.
  - Add a programmable smart thermostat for electric heating or cooling to lower energy consumption during peak periods.
  - Schedule non-heating and cooling activities during off-peak hours such as using your washer and electric dryer.
  - Turn off certain appliances such as air conditioners, humidifiers/dehumidifiers and fans when you are not home.
  - Enroll in our demand response programs which offer incentives to residential, small business, and industrial customers when you reduce electricity use during times of peak demand.
  - In the future, you will be able to access potential "what-if" scenarios on the Energy Manager to understand how certain behaviors impact usage or if a device can be installed on an appliance to reduce energy consumption during peak periods.
- [Are customers required to purchase devices to view their daily usage?](#)  
Our free online Energy Manager will be available on the NYSEG website this year or early 2018.
- [How much detail about my energy use can I see online?](#)  
You will have access to your energy use right down to the hour.

- [What will NYSEG do with my data?](#)  
We will only be using your specific data for billing purposes. Your data will be available for you to see and understand in easy, simple terms when you log onto NYSEG.com. We will continue to protect the confidentiality of your account information as we do today.
- [I'm a tenant; will my landlord be able to see my usage data?](#)  
Only the account holder will be able to see usage data.

## Network and Data Security

- [Is the smart meter network secure?](#)  
Cyber security is of the utmost importance to us and is taken very seriously. We have extensive experience maintaining cyber security for information systems and operating the electricity grid. While smart meters have added a new component to our system, the meters, communications, and information management are subject to the same Department of Energy security standards that keep the grid secure.
- [How is my personal data protected?](#)  
We use multiple layers of technology and operating procedures to keep all customer information secure. Smart meters use data encryption to protect your information when it is relayed to our system.
- [Does NYSEG sell customer data to other companies?](#)  
We do not sell customer data. Customers have free access to their data through the online Energy Manager. Customers who are interested in exploring energy efficiency, solar and/or other products and services may provide their consent to share their data with third parties directly from within Energy Manager if they choose to do so. We strictly screen all third parties and they are held to the same strict standard of protecting customer data as we are.

## Radio Frequency Interference

- [Do smart meters interfere with my other household appliances such as computer routers, television signals, cordless phones, etc.?](#)  
The FCC regulates all electronics to prevent one type of electronic equipment from interfering with other electronic and wireless devices that operate in the same frequency band. If you do experience interference, here are some tips that may help resolve the issue:
  - **Location:** Separating interfering devices usually reduces interference, so make sure the wireless device is located as far from the smart meter as possible. Also, adjust the position of the antenna on the device, if possible, and move the wireless device away from any walls that may absorb the signal.
  - **Frequency:** In some instances, changing the operating frequency of your wireless devices will eliminate interference. For wireless enabled internet routers, a change to either channel one or channel eleven is often effective.
  - **Manufacturer Installation Instructions:** Check to ensure that your wireless device or devices have been installed according to the manufacturer's instructions. Some manufacturers may recommend using a surge protection device.
- [How does the information from my smart meter get to a NYSEG building?](#)  
Smart meters use radiofrequency signals similar to a home Wi Fi system to send information to NYSEG through a network of devices that collect and relay the signals.
- [I still have concerns about Radio Frequency, where can I get answers?](#)  
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County is available to answer questions. Please visit their website at: [www.ccetompkins.org/esc](http://www.ccetompkins.org/esc) for more information or email them at: [energysmartcommunity@cornell.edu](mailto:energysmartcommunity@cornell.edu).

## Other information

- [I have solar power at my home - how does a smart meter work?](#)  
Homeowners with private solar will be able to view both the energy delivered and energy received on hourly profiles using the new Energy Manager. The smart meter measures the “net” energy. When your electrical usage is greater than your PV system output, the smart meter registers energy. In this scenario, your generation is supplying part of your electricity and your remaining electricity is supplied from the grid. If the opposite is true, and you use less than your PV system’s output, the excess generation is exported to the grid and the smart meter sees this export as credit to you. If usage equals generation, then the smart meter sees zero energy flow.
- [Do I still call NYSEG if the power goes off?](#)  
Yes, you should still report a power outage via our mobile view or automated phone system. Reports of outages provide useful information to help us respond to outages quickly and efficiently.
- [Are smart meters susceptible to damage from severe weather?](#)  
Smart meters are no more susceptible to damage from extreme weather conditions than older meters or any piece of outdoor equipment. However, the daily communications from the smart meters, we are able to detect issues promptly.
- [Who owns the electric meter on my house or business?](#)  
NYSEG owns the electrical meter and the line that runs from the building to the pole. The property owner owns the meter enclosure box and all of the wiring in the home or business.
- [Can NYSEG turn power off and on without sending a truck to the location?](#)  
Yes. For nearly all of our customers, smart meters will allow us to turn power on and off using this technology in the future. Once installed and connected to our system, we will only be using this technology for a “requested” turn off, normal collection procedures will not change. For your safety, NYSEG requires the main breaker be turned off prior to any reconnection of service. Appliances that may have been left on, will resume operation once the service is turned on.
- [Are smart meters safe?](#)  
The low-power radio equipment in NYSEG’s smart meters is certified by the United States Federal Communications Commission (FCC), ensuring compliance with appropriate safety standards<sup>1</sup>. A smart meter communicates information about electricity use with us by sending very brief radiofrequency (RF) signals. Several familiar devices produce stronger RF fields, including cellular telephones, walkie-talkies, and cordless phones, which, in addition, are positioned close to the user for a longer period of time. Other common household devices that also use low-power radio signals include televisions, wireless internet systems, laptop computers, video game consoles, and baby monitors.

National and international organizations have developed exposure limits to ensure that these devices can be used safely. These were developed after comprehensive reviews of RF research. The organizations include the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the International Commission on Nonionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), which is part of the World Health Organization (WHO), the U.S. National Commission on Radiological Protection, and Great Britain’s Health Protection Agency<sup>2</sup>. In the United States, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the United States Federal Communications Commission (FCC) have also developed safety standards. The RF signals from smart meters in typical installations are tens to hundreds of times below levels specified in the FCC regulations and in standards as safe for everyday exposure.

To learn more about radio technology and safety, visit the Federal Communications Commission website for radiofrequency safety at [www.fcc.gov/oet/rfsafety](http://www.fcc.gov/oet/rfsafety).

<sup>1</sup> The term “standards” refers to exposure limits recommended by scientific or health organizations that have reviewed and evaluated the relevant scientific research.

<sup>2</sup> The organization now includes the National Radiological Protection Board in the U.K. that formerly had responsibility for providing information and recommendations about radiofrequency fields and electromagnetic fields at other frequencies, as well as ionizing radiation sources.

- *Is a smart meter safe for homes with older wiring?*  
A smart meter does not impose any additional burden to the existing meter enclosure or house wiring. The meter installer has been trained to inspect your meter enclosure for any potential equipment concerns. This process could potentially uncover problems that otherwise would go unnoticed. This step was incorporated into our installation process as a safety procedure for our installers as well as our customers.
- *Will the location of my meter change?*  
We do not plan to change the physical location of any meters.
- *I have a smart thermostat. Will NYSEG use the smart meter to adjust the settings on my thermostat or control any other appliances in my house?*  
Smart meters can record only the whole house usage, they cannot control individual appliances. If you have a Wi-Fi enabled thermostat and have signed up for our Smart Savings Rewards program, we would adjust your thermostat the same way we do today.
- *Why can I only see my energy usage the next day? When will I be able to monitor my usage in real time?*  
NYSEG is continually evaluating new technologies to better meet customer needs in a cost-effective manner.
- *I am a business customer. What changes will I see?*  
If you are currently a Mandatory Hourly Pricing customer and NYSEG reads your meter remotely, you will not see any changes. All other business customers receive a new smart meter, giving them access to our free online Energy Manager and any future services or enhancements.
- *Why would NYSEG support energy efficiency and renewable energy such as solar energy?*  
We support energy efficiency and renewable energy. One of our most significant environmental initiatives is the ongoing reduction of carbon dioxide (CO2) equivalent emissions.

We've reduced our carbon footprint through a variety of methods including:

- Improving fuel efficiency of our fleet vehicles – including increasing the use of hybrids
- Decommissioning our fossil-fuel generating plants
- Upgrading our hydroelectric generation capacity
- Increasing overall energy efficiency in our buildings
- Encouraging and rewarding our customers to conserve energy
- Supporting the increased use of advanced technologies such as the smart grid to empower customers and enable dynamic electricity pricing
- Eliminating vehicle use where possible

Through the Energy Smart Community, we will test integration of clean energy resources and provide products and services that offer greater control over their energy usage and total energy bills.

- *Why is NYSEG trying to reduce energy consumption?*  
Reforming the Energy Vision is Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's comprehensive energy strategy for New York. This strategy helps consumers make more informed energy choices, develop new energy products and services, and protect the environment.

We support initiatives that:

- Help our customers get the best value for their energy dollar
- Increase the growth of clean energy production
- Reduce greenhouse gases
- Provide information to customers so they can make informed choices
- Protect New York's natural resources
- Support cleaner transportation
- Grow New York's energy efficiency

## Contact us

- *If I have questions about smart meters, who do I contact?*

If you have further questions about the smart meter, you can call 1.800.925.1559, Monday through Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. or send us an email at [energysmartcommunity@nyseg.com](mailto:energysmartcommunity@nyseg.com).

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