



CPUC Independent Evaluation of PG&E's Electric Smart Meters
Frequently Asked Questions Update
May 13, 2010

Q1. What are Smart Meters?

Smart Meters are modern replacements for traditional meters. In addition to producing billing data not affected by the wear that mechanical meters typically experience over time, Smart Meters enable utilities to provide customers with detailed information about their energy usage at different times of the day. Knowledge of consumption patterns enables customers to manage their energy use more proactively. Smart Meters allow for faster outage detection and restoration of service by a utility, provide customers with greater control over their electricity use when coupled with time-based rates, help the environment by reducing the need to build power plants, and are the first step toward creating a Smart Grid in California. According to the Edison Foundation, a nonprofit industry organization, more than 8 million Smart Meters already have been installed by electric utilities in the U.S.

Q2. What are the problems with PG&E's electric Smart Meters?

There is no statistical evidence to suggest any broad issue with Smart Meters. However, similarly to mechanical meters, there are many technical aspects of the meter installation, communication, data gathering, and data processing that must be performed to accurately utilize the data for billing purposes. Having received consumer complaints and hearing from members of the State Legislature, the CPUC determined that it is appropriate to conduct an independent evaluation focusing first on the San Joaquin Valley area, but also evaluating PG&E's overall Smart Meter system, including sample testing of Smart Meters from other parts of PG&E's service territory.



Q3. Why is The Structure Group involved with Smart Meters in California?

The Structure Group was one of 15 companies or teams that responded to a CPUC call for proposals to test and validate Smart Meter and billing accuracy of PG&E's Smart Meters.

Q4. How was Structure selected for this project?

Structure was selected by the CPUC based on the company's knowledge and experience with smart metering technologies and approach towards testing. The company also is viewed as being capable of efficiently and effectively operating this project on behalf of California's consumers.

Q5. How will Structure conduct its research?

Structure will perform testing across representative samples of the electric meter population associated with complaints filed with the CPUC, complaints filed with PG&E, and those provided directly from the office of Senate Majority Leader Dean Florez (D-Shafter). Structure will examine overall data to indicate whether PG&E's Smart Meter system is collecting, measuring, and billing electric usage accurately, both now and since Smart Meter deployment began. Structure also will conduct analyses of the high bill customer complaints to determine the underlying nature of the complaint. As part of the evaluation of these high bill complaints, Structure will interview a sample of customers whose usage patterns are not readily explained using conventional analyses, such as comparing usage to weather data. Structure will analyze past and current operational and deployment processes, policies, and procedures associated with PG&E's Smart Meter program against the framework of industry best practices.

Q6. How will I know if I've been selected to participate in the evaluation?

Structure is sending out letters notifying consumers if they have been selected to be a part of the evaluation. Additionally, a Structure representative may also try and reach you by phone as part of the evaluation.



Q7. If I am selected as part of the evaluation, how can I find out results related to my meter?

Structure will communicate results after the test has been completed by contacting participants by telephone. Based on the type of test, the results may be completed within 7 days and others may have a six week time frame if inclusive of a billing cycle.

Q8. Why will it take four to six months for Structure to complete this research?

Structure is committed to a careful examination of all the facts and circumstances surrounding each selected case. The research environment is far broader than just the device mounted on the side of every electricity customer's home or business in California. How electrical usage data moves from the Smart Meter all the way through to individual customer bills must be a part of this evaluation. As would any responsible researcher, Structure's team is beginning this evaluation with a clean slate and the goal of providing information on which the CPUC can base appropriate next steps regarding PG&E's Smart Meters.

Q9. Who do I contact if I think my Smart Meter is not operating correctly?

To submit a complaint about your Smart Meter, the CPUC can be contacted at www.cpuc.ca.gov/PUC/CEC/e_complaint/a_utilitycomplaint.htm or call 1-800-649-7570, or write to CPUC, Consumer Affairs Branch, 505 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco, CA 94102. There is also an online form to file a complaint at <https://ia.cpuc.ca.gov/cimsapp/>.