

MID E-Release

Information Release



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MID launches SMART meter project

Wireless wonder, digital data, read by remote, cellular communications – however you describe its features, the Modesto Irrigation District’s SMART meter project is a giant technology leap for the humble electric meter.

Over the next six or so months, the Modesto Irrigation District (MID) will replace every residential and commercial electric meter in its system – about 100,000 total – with advanced digital smart meters. MID began limited testing of residential smart meters the last week of 2008. Full-scale deployment is planned for the week of Jan. 19, and installation of commercial smart meters is scheduled for February.

No more electromechanical dials like those gracing almost every electric meter since the era of Thomas Edison. In their place: an easy-to-read, digital liquid crystal display.

No more trekking on foot to every home and business to read those dials. Smart meters transmit customers’ electric usage data by radio to data collection points. From there data will be relayed via fiber-optic cable or a secure cellular telephone network to MID’s downtown Modesto office.

Also gone: Frustrating delays in turning on or off electric service when customers move into or out of a new residence. Instead: an array of new customer benefits including:

- Faster repairs during power outages.
- Fewer miles driven to read meters, resulting in cleaner air and lower gasoline expense.
- Innovative energy-saving programs in the future.

Tom Kimball, MID’s Assistant General Manager for Transmission and Distribution, says: “Smart meters make good economic sense for consumers and utilities alike in this time of rising electric rates. Moreover, the California Energy Commission may soon require this type of electric meter, and the Legislature is moving in the same direction.”

MID’s meter readers will check the new smart meters the old-fashioned way for two to three months after installation. During this test period, MID will ensure that its remote communications system is working correctly. After this, meter readers will no longer routinely visit homes and commercial businesses. Occasionally, MID will still need to repair, replace or test electric meters. So customers should make sure MID technicians can access electric meters in the future.

MID anticipates recouping the approximately \$21.27 million investment in the SMART meter project in a five- to ten-year time frame and passing on subsequent savings to ratepayers.

Attachment:
MID SMART Meter Project Quick Reference Guide

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