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Advanced meter Q&A

FortisBC is now installing advanced meters in the Kootenays. Here are some questions and answers about the new electricity meters:

What is an advanced meter?

Advanced meters look like regular digital meters. The main difference is they're able to communicate wirelessly with FortisBC. Once the meters are activated, FortisBC won't have to come onto your property to read the meter for billing purposes. That information will be sent wirelessly.

Why is FortisBC switching to advanced meters?

Wireless advanced meters make it less costly for FortisBC to deliver electricity to its customers by preventing theft and reducing meter reading costs. With more than 50 million advanced meters now installed across North America, utilities are using these meters to help keep rates low.

What are some of the benefits?

By not having to manually read meters, it means wireless reads will virtually eliminate bill estimates. Next year, there will be new tools available through Account Online for you to view more timely and useful information about your account. New billing options, like monthly billing and pick your own billing date, will also become available next year.

Are advanced meters safe?

FortisBC has safely installed more than 100,000 advanced meters in the Southern Interior. The meter installer will knock on your door in case you're home and want to turn off any electronics. (You don't have to be home for the exchange.) The installer will inspect your meter base for any potential existing safety issues before installing the new meter.

Are the wireless signals safe?

Health Canada states advanced meters do not pose a health risk. They operate well within the country's wireless signal guidelines – and most of the strictest international standards. While electricity meters are located outside of your home, the signals from the meters are much lower than common devices found inside many homes, such as Wi-Fi routers and baby monitors, and well below cellular phones.

Can I get a meter that doesn't use wireless signals?

There is a radio-off option that gives customers the choice of an advanced meter with the wireless transmissions disabled. The BC Utilities Commission approved fees for the radio-off option, including a per-premise fee of \$88 and an ongoing per-read fee of \$18, usually every other month.

Am I required to get an advanced meter?

This is an equipment upgrade for all customers. There isn't an option to keep the old electricity meter. FortisBC has determined that the advanced meter is the best metering option for its customers, and the BC Utilities Commission, through a rigorous review, has supported that selection.

Are they certified?

Advanced meters are certified by UL, IEEE, ANSI, Industry Canada and Measurement Canada. Like other utility owned and operated equipment, electricity meters do not require certification from the Canadian Standards Association because that standard applies to consumer products.

Can I refuse the meter?

Technically, yes. However, if you do FortisBC will be forced to disconnect your electricity service. The utility owns the meter and is responsible for its safe operation and accuracy. Refusing an electricity meter is the same as refusing to receive electricity service.

What if I'm disconnected?

If you refuse a meter and are disconnected, you'll need to choose the type of meter you wish to receive before FortisBC is able to exchange the meter and restore power. As with other instances where power is disconnected, there is a fee to safely reconnect to the system.

Who do I call if I have other questions?

If you have unanswered questions about advanced meters, call FortisBC at **1-866-436-7847** or visit fortisbc.com/ami.