

Smart Meters

Smart meters are being rolled out to all Victorian households and small businesses over the next four years as part of a major technology upgrade to our electricity infrastructure.

Victoria is the first state in Australia to give the go-ahead for the widespread roll-out of smart meters. Covering 2.2 million homes and 300,000 businesses, this is a big task. It represents one of the largest improvements to energy infrastructure in the state's history.

The new smart meters – also known as advanced metering infrastructure – will provide two-way communication between your electricity meter and your power company, making more immediate information about your electricity use available to you both.

It's a key step towards future smart electricity grids, which we need to better manage new energy flows as more and more renewable energy is supplied to the grid - whether from small-scale rooftop solar panels, or from more powerful wind farms.

People will also benefit from more information about how they use energy, with the meters providing accurate electricity reads every 30 minutes. This will help people work out how they can best reduce their energy use and cut power bills.

It will be easier to connect and disconnect power when moving house, and power companies will be able to locate outages and restore power more quickly. For many, it will also mean the end of estimated bills or staying in for meter readings.

Independent analysis has shown that the smart meters project will deliver net benefits to Victoria of up to \$700 million over the next 20 years.

Electricity distribution businesses - which own the poles and wires that deliver electricity to homes and businesses – are responsible for installing the new smart meters. They will notify you in advance about when your smart meter will be installed.

Installation of smart meters in Victorian homes and businesses started in September 2009 and will finish by the end of 2013.

As the roll-out of smart meters progresses, your electricity retail company – the company that sends you your electricity bill – might have new pricing options for you. Energy retail companies in Victoria compete for your business, so you should shop around for the deal that best suits you. For more information visit www.yourchoice.vic.gov.au

For more information about the smart meters roll-out project visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au/smartmeters

What do smart meters do?

A smart meter is a new type of tool to measure and record how much electricity you use at different times of the day and week.

It's able to measure energy use every 30 minutes, and using telecommunication technology, it can provide this information remotely to your power company.

Smart meters will progressively replace the existing meters for homes and small businesses in Victoria over the next four years.

How can a smart meter help save energy and money?

By better understanding your electricity use, it's easier to change your behaviour to use less – which can save money on power bills. For energy saving information and tips visit www.saveenergy.vic.gov.au

As the smart meters roll-out progresses, new types of electricity pricing may become available. This includes time-of-use rates, which vary the price of electricity based on the time of day or week, making electricity charges higher in peak periods and lower in off-peak periods. Research indicates that by choosing the right new pricing deal you could make substantial savings on your power bills each year.

For more information on smart meters and what they do visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au/smartmeters



Frequently Asked Questions

Why has the Victorian Government decided to upgrade to smart meters?

The Victorian Government is preparing the state for our energy future.

Part of this is upgrading our energy infrastructure. Smart meters will help pave the way for smart grids, which will be important as we increase our renewable energy generation. They will also help people better manage their electricity use and cut greenhouse gas emissions and power bills.

When will I get my smart meter?

The smart meter roll-out started in September 2009, and will run to the end of 2013. Smart meters are being installed progressively a few suburbs at a time, by electricity distribution businesses. It is up to each business to decide the areas where they will install smart meters first. They will let you know directly about a month before smart meters are being installed in your area.

How will I know when my smart meter will be installed?

When smart meters are being installed in your area, you will receive introductory letters from the Victorian Government and your electricity distribution business. A following letter will then tell you when the meter will be installed in your property – providing a 10-day period within which it will occur.

How will they get access to my meter?

Your electricity distribution business requires clear and safe access to your meter box to complete the smart meter installation. If they can access your meter, you do not have to be home when the smart meter is installed. If you need to be home to provide access, you will be able to make arrangements with your distribution business.

What happens when they install my new smart meter?

Qualified meter installers appointed by your electricity distribution business will come to your property to remove your old meter and replace it with a new smart meter.

Meter installers will have photo ID stating that the person is a contractor representing your electricity distributor. This ID will have a telephone number to call so you can check if the installer is an authorised representative.

Before starting work, the installer will knock on your door to let you know. Your power will need to be switched off for a short time – approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Once installed, you will receive instructions on how to read your new smart meter.

If you would like to receive this information/publication in an accessible format (such as large print or audio) please call the Customer Service Centre on 136 186, TTY 1800 122 969, or email customer.service@dpi.vic.gov.au.

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Does everyone get a smart meter?

Yes, everyone whose energy usage is less than 160 megawatt hours a year will receive a new smart meter. This includes all homes and small to medium businesses. Delivering this technology to everyone is the only way we can transition to smarter, more efficient, electricity grids on a statewide basis.

Who is paying for the smart meters?

In the same way you pay for your current meter and electricity infrastructure (the poles and wires), the costs of the smart meters roll-out will be added to your electricity bill over a number of years.

Do I own the smart meter?

No. Like your existing electricity meter, the smart meter is owned by your electricity distribution business.

What is the difference between electricity distribution businesses and electricity retail companies?

Victorian electricity distribution businesses are responsible for the poles and wires that bring electricity to homes and businesses across the state. Your electricity distributor depends on where you live – you cannot choose your distribution company.

In Victoria, there are five different electricity distributors – SP AusNet, Powercor, CitiPower, Jemena Electricity Network and United Energy Distribution. To find out which distribution company is yours visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au/smartmeters

Electricity retail companies sell electricity to customers. It's the company that sends you your electricity bill. You can choose your energy retailer and they compete for your business. For more information on choosing your energy retail company visit www.yourchoice.vic.gov.au

Where can I go to get more information?

Visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au/smartmeters or call the Department of Primary Industries Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

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