



CITY OF LE SUEUR
REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Jasper Kruggel, City Administrator
SUBJECT: Manual Meter Read Discussion
DATE: For the City Council Meeting of Monday February 24, 2020

PURPOSE

Council member Sullivan has requested a discussion related to the manual meter read fee included in the City of Le Sueur Utility Rate Fee Schedule.

SUMMARY

The City of Le Sueur has offered the ability for a resident to request a meter that requires a manual read since 2017. Residents may have a variety of reasons to request a manual read meter and they City provides them with that option. The current meters the City of Le Sueur uses transmit radio waves. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulates these devices and has a duty to ensure such devices are safe to use. Attached to this agenda item is a fact sheet about meters and radio waves.

Currently, to enroll in the manual read program, the resident would have to purchase a new water meter and a new electric meter since our current meters tie into our Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system and transmit radio waves. The cost of each of these manual read meters is around \$200 per meter.

Additionally, the City of Le Sueur charges a manual meter reading fee of \$25 per month for the electric meter and essential water meter. We do not charge a manual meter read fee on a non-essential water meter. The cost breakdown for cost justification is below; personnel costs use the FEMA reimbursement worksheet, and the equipment costs have been adopted by City Council in the governmental fee schedule:

Meter Reading Costs (Time from WWTP → Residence → City Hall → WWTP)

Water/Wastewater Personnel - (\$53.97/hour @ 0.5 hrs) = \$26.99

Vehicle Cost – (\$55.00/hour @ 0.5 hrs) = \$27.50

Utility Billing Manual Entry

Meter Reading Manual Entry and Manual Bill Generation – (\$55.00 @ 0.25 hrs) = \$13.75

Equipment Maintenance and Replacement

TouchRead 6590 Meter Reading Gun (Required for Water Meter) – Initial cost \$1,750.00

The total estimate of cost to preform the manual meter read, submit that data to the Utility Billing Coordinator, and for the Utility Billing Coordinator to manual enter the data and manually generate the

bill is estimated at \$68.24. This does not include any maintenance or replacement costs related to the TouchRead 6590 Meter Reading Gun, which we currently own, but will come out of support and need to be replaced in the future.

There have been some ideas related to self-reporting of the meter read which could reduce the cost related to having someone physically read the meters monthly. Self-reporting is not recommended as issues with non-reporting policies and scalability may be costly and difficult to implement.

ACTION REQUESTED

Staff is soliciting discussion related to the manual meter read fee from City Council. City Council has the authority to alter the fee related to the manual meter read fee at any time. If City Council so chooses to alter this fee, they may do so by a motion indicating the amount and the effective date.

Myths vs. Facts: The Truth about Smart Meters

Misunderstanding advanced technology can lead to the emergence of urban legends. The case is no different with smart meters, which utilities are rolling out across the country in an effort to bring the benefits of a modernized electric grid to consumers like you.

The following are the most commonly circulated smart meter myths. Our responses, each supported by research, offer the facts — the real deal on smart meters.

MYTH NO. 1
Smart meters are less accurate than analog meters.

TRUTH: Smart meters are rigorously tested for accuracy even before they leave the manufacturing plant.

TRUTH: Some public service commissions require meter manufacturers to supply test results to prove that their smart meters generate on-the-mark measurements. All meter manufacturers must follow performance standards set by the American National Standards Institute.

TRUTH: Prior to installation, utilities repeatedly perform accuracy tests, often side-by-side with analog meters.

Repeated tests confirm that smart meters are accurate, in some cases even more accurate than analog meters.

MYTH NO. 2
Smart meters are a health threat because they communicate using wireless signals.

TRUTH: In-depth review of the scientific literature by the World Health Organization (WHO) revealed that the small amount of radio frequency (RF) energy produced by smart meters is not harmful to human health.

TRUTH: RF emitted by smart meters is well below the limits set by Federal Communications Commission and it is below levels produced by other common household devices like cell phones, baby monitors, satellite TVs, and microwaves. In fact, you would have to be exposed to the RF from a smart meter for 375 years to get a dose equivalent to that of one year of 15-minutes-per-day cell phone use.

No credible evidence shows any threat to human health from RF emissions at or below RF exposure limits developed by the FCC. With over 25,000 articles published on the topic over the last 30 years, scientific knowledge in this area is now more extensive than for most chemicals.

MYTH NO. 3
Smart meters will not keep my data secure.

TRUTH: Just as the banking, credit card and cable industries have provided secure access to your information online, the utility industry is poised to do the same using advanced security and encryption technology to safeguard your data.

TRUTH: Utilities are involved in national consortiums and work with national cyber-security to regularly audit their systems to ensure privacy and security of smart meters.

The privacy of your data is protected now. Utilities work constantly to safeguard it. That will not change with the use of smart meters.

MYTH NO. 4

Smart meters are hazardous, increasing the risk of fire and explosion.

TRUTH: Smart meters must meet safety requirements and standards spelled out in the National Electric Safety Code (NESC).

TRUTH: Public service commissions require independent certification proving that smart meters are safe and show resistance to heat, fire, voltages, surges, and self-heating.

Companies that manufacture smart meters produce certifiably safe and reliable equipment. Nevertheless, smart meters should be installed and uninstalled only by trained professionals exercising standard safety precautions.

MYTH NO. 5

Smart meters are an invasion of privacy.

TRUTH: Smart meters measure how much energy you use, based on time of day, not how you use that energy. Unless you install a home energy management system, smart meters cannot tell whether the energy used is from your oven, air conditioner, or hairdryer.

TRUTH: Utilities adhere to strict policies, following state laws that regulate the use of personal information for business functions like billing and customer service.

Smart meters are a landmark change allowing two-way communication between your utility and you, much like cell phones and banking. Utilities keep your data private and secure, similar to those industries and similar to how it's always been.

MYTH NO. 6

Smart meters do not provide any consumer benefits.

TRUTH: Smart meters measure and transmit your energy usage directly to your utility, eliminating the practice of estimated bills, which means no more surprises on your electric bill.

TRUTH: Smart meters provide you with near-real time energy usage information about how much, when and in some cases, at what price, you use energy. Armed with this information, you can take more control over your energy consumption—and your monthly bills.

TRUTH: Working as a part of the smart grid, smart meters improve power outage detection and notification. Smart meters electronically report the location of outages before you ever have to call your utility, making restoration faster and status notification to you much easier.

Greater reliability, faster power restoration, convenience, and control are just a few of the many benefits of smart meters.



Working for a consumer-friendly,
consumer-safe smart grid

SGCC is a consumer focused non-profit organization aiming to promote the understanding and benefits of modernized electrical systems among all stakeholders in the United States. Membership is open to all consumer and environmental advocates, technology vendors, research scientists, and electric utilities for sharing in research, best practices, and collaborative efforts of the group.

Join @ www.smartgridcc.org.

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Separating myths from reality allows you to take advantage of all the benefits that a smarter, more modernized electric grid offers. It's important to stay informed and learn about the different ways your utility is deploying smart grid and smart meters to improve their electric service. For trusted information about smart grid and smart meters visit the Smart Grid Consumer Collaborative (SGCC) at smartgridcc.org, the US Department of Energy at SmartGrid.gov, or your utility website.