

Automated Meter Reading

Smart Meter Questions

Is this the same as the smart grid program that CMP is using?

Much of the controversy relating to electric Smart Meters is not relevant to our system. Both systems transmit data from the home to a central processing unit using a mesh system. The CMP smart meter, however, is much more sophisticated in the quantity and quality of data it can collect and transmit. The CMP network is active throughout the day, reportedly sending thousands of signals out from each meter daily. Our system, in contrast, will transmit a small amount of data only once a day for a fraction of a second. In addition, our data is limited to consumption data, meter identifiers, and trouble alarms, so privacy concerns are limited.

The CMP transceiver unit is actually incorporated as part of the meter and is powered by electricity feeding the meter, so concerns about fire safety have been raised. That concern is virtually eliminated in our system because the endpoint is battery powered.

Do other Maine water utilities use AMR?

AMR is becoming the standard for meter reading systems, and most medium and large systems in Maine are in the process of building their systems. Each system uses a radio connected to the meter but they differ in how the radio signals are received. Some utilities are using a mesh system and others have opted to install central antennae systems where each endpoint communicates directly to the antenna. Others are using a “drive-by” system where the meter reader collects the reading via radio using a laptop in a vehicle.

Each system has their own characteristics and considerations that lead them to prefer one meter reading system over another. We selected our system because it was the most cost-effective, reliable, and adaptable system that meets our needs.

We have had discussions with several other Maine water utilities that have had AMR in place for several years. We have received no reports of customer issues associated with those installations.