

Régie de l'énergie - Dossier R-3863-2013

Autorisation d'investissements - Projet Lecture à Distance (LAD) Phases 2 et 3 d'Hydro-Québec Distribution

C A N A D A

PROVINCE DE QUÉBEC
DISTRICT DE MONTRÉAL

DOSSIER R-3863-2013

RÉGIE DE L'ÉNERGIE

AUTORISATION D'INVESTISSEMENTS
RELATIFS AU
PROJET LECTURE À DISTANCE (LAD)
PHASES 2 ET 3
D'HYDRO-QUÉBEC DISTRIBUTION

HYDRO-QUÉBEC
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STRATÉGIES ÉNERGÉTIQUES (S.É.)

ASSOCIATION QUÉBÉCOISE DE LUTTE
CONTRE LA POLLUTION ATMOSPHÉRIQUE
(AQLPA)

Demanderesse en Intervention

PIÈCE SÉ-AQLPA-3 - DOCUMENT 2

Articles faisant état d'incendies de compteurs de nouvelle génération
dans diverses juridictions

Déposée par :
Stratégies Énergétiques (S.É.)
Association québécoise de lutte contre la pollution atmosphérique (AQLPA)

Le 22 novembre 2013

Régie de l'énergie - Dossier R-3863-2013

Autorisation d'investissements - Projet Lecture à Distance (LAD) Phases 2 et 3 d'Hydro-Québec Distribution

Pièce SÉ-AQLPA-3 - Document 2

**Articles faisant état d'incendies de compteurs de nouvelle génération dans diverses juridictions
Déposée par Stratégies Énergétiques (S.É.) et l'AQLPA**

Smart Meter Causes Dumb Fire

By Kim Zetter - Wired

2012 09 12.

<http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2012/09/self-combusting-smart-meters/>



A General Electric smart meter after it burst into flames at a home in Illinois. *Image courtesy of Shirley Bayliff*

In June 2010, Shirley Bayliff was sitting at the piano in her suburban Illinois home, giving music lessons to a student, when she heard a “pop” outside the house before the power went out.

When she and her husband looked out the window, they saw five-foot flames shooting out from a new General Electric smart meter their utility company had installed as part of a pilot project. “Very, very scary,” she told *Crain’s Chicago Business* newspaper.

Apparently Bayliff isn’t the only who got a surprise from her smart meter. Since then, two more of the 130,000 smart meters Commonwealth Edison installed in the area have burst into flames, one in 2011 and one this last July, according to the newspaper.

ComEd recently disclosed the fires, as well as information about 15 other overheating incidents that caused damage to smart meters, only after another utility in Philadelphia, Peco Energy, decided to suspend installation of smart meters there following a fire in a home and a dozen incidents involving overheating smart meters.

In the Philadelphia case, a neighbor called the fire department on a Sunday morning after hearing a pop and seeing sparks and flames shooting out from the meter of another house.

Overheating problems with smart meters have also been reported in Maryland by Baltimore Gas and Electric Co. All three utility companies are owned by the Exelon Corp, based in Illinois.



Fire from the smart meter melted part of a window screen (at right). Firefighters told the homeowner that her house would have been more damaged if the meter had been installed on a wood wall instead of one made from brick. *Image courtesy of Shirley Bayliff*

ComEd described the incidents in Illinois as “small fires.” But Bayliff, whose meter caught fire just 71 days after ComEd installed it, says the flames would have burned down her house if the meter hadn’t been installed on a brick wall.

“We saw huge flames,” Bayliff told the newspaper. “Luckily, there wasn’t much damage because (the house) was brick ... When the firemen arrived, the lieutenant said if we lived in a wood house they’d be ripping off the shingles and hosing down the attic right now.”

ComEd denied the fire was caused by the meter and blamed the combustion on faulty house wiring where the meter was installed, which the company said was Bayliff’s problem. ComEd said faulty wiring was behind a second fire as well. The third reported fire is still under investigation.

The utility refused to pay the \$2,900 in damages to Bayliff’s house – which included a melted window screen and the cost of replacing the wiring – but relented after Bayliff threatened to make it a public safety issue.

“Once I got their attention, they were very accommodating,” she told the paper.

A massive explosion of a bank of smart meters in Forest, Ontario

resulting from a power surge. It was pure luck that no one was badly injured or worse. It will happen here. This article will be published in the local newspaper later this week.

Nov 7 2013

by Eric Nixon

<https://www.facebook.com/StopSmartMetersinBC/posts/553662208046082>

Families on Eureka Street in Forest found out the Hydro One Smart Meters they have installed on their homes aren't quite as smart as they were led to believe. A power surge blew out between 60 and 70 of the meters on the street and led to hydro being shut off for more than a day, starting about 1:00 pm on Halloween.

Don Plowright, who lives with his wife in the Fairview Court Apartments, says the meters sustained a lot of damage. "Some of them blew right off and hit one of the windows," he remarks. "Ours was all blackened. The people next to us, the meter was blown right off and the wires were sticking out."

That led to Hydro One taking immediate action to prevent anyone from getting injured. "They cut all the wires leading into the apartment building, so that no one could get electrocuted," says Plowright.

Apparently, this was a totally new experience for the Hydro One crews. "They were really surprised. They said that they'd never had anything like this happen before. There's safety things that they have that if anything happens, it will short everything out. But, for some reason, it didn't. That's why all the things blew," Plowright recounts.

Hydro One employee Ron Core, one of the crew members onsite, says the surge was caused when a 16,000 volt line landed on a 2,000 volt line during the high winds last Thursday, blowing one transformer and destroying the Smart Meters.

Plowright was surprised how quickly workers managed to restore power. "One of the guys that came around first said that it wouldn't be done until Monday or Tuesday," he says. On Friday, a large number of Hydro One crews were onsite, along with electricians from private companies. "They were really working hard. They got everything done," says Plowright.

The Eureka Street resident says he's not impressed by the so-called Smart Meters – and he's not the only one. When they were installed at his former residence, Plowright says, "The guy that looked after that said they're not very good. Most of the old ones were made in Canada. These are made in China and they're not made to stand up to real rough weather. He didn't think much of them." The meters are manufactured by a company called Landis + Gyr, which is headquartered in Switzerland, but was bought by Toshiba Corporation of Japan in 2011.

One Eureka Street resident wondered how Hydro One was going to calculate hydro bills for residents, since the new meters were zeroed when they were installed. A Hydro One representative said off the record that he expected the residents' bills would be pro-rated

based on their normal previous and current usage.

In addition to the Eureka Street outages, approximately 2,700 local Hydro One customers lost power on Halloween afternoon, but most had service restored by 4:00 the same day. For Plowright, he says the outage did not cause any damage in his house, other than water in the basement caused when the apartment's sump pump was shut down. "They had to have people come into each apartment to check that the wiring was okay," he says. As well, people were given papers by Hydro One representatives to report any damage that might have been caused by the outage.

In addition to the quick service by the workers, Plowright was grateful to Christ Church in Forest where he's a member of the congregation. "We had a lot of food that was in the freezer and they allowed us to put it in the freezer at the basement," he says.

Combined with the relatively mild temperatures for this time of year, the outage and the potential for danger caused by the blown Smart Meters ended up being more of an unwelcome inconvenience for the Eureka Street residents, one that was largely mitigated due to the speedy, professional efforts of the Hydro One crews involved.

EMF Safety Network

Smart Meter Fires and Explosions

<http://emfsafetynetwork.org/smart-meters/smart-meter-fires-and-explosions/>

(up to date 2013 11 07)



The following is a compilation of reports from the US , Australia and Canada about fires, explosions or burned out appliances due to Smart Meter installations. If you have experienced similar problems, please post your story in the comment section below.

The US Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) is a federal agency that will take complaints on utility smart meters from all US states. If you have or had smart meter electrical or fire problems CALL: (800) 638-2772 Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. ET or submit your complaint by email.

8/2013 Lakeland fire sparks concerns about 'smart meters' (Florida) TV news reported ,
"A charred electrical box is what's left of a very scary weekend outside Cherie Oberg's
Carillon Lakes condo in Lakeland. Oberg says the digital "smart meter" on her home
burst into flames damaging two adjoining meters. The flames fizzled out by the time
Lakeland firefighters arrived, but the fear sparked by the situation is still smoldering for
Oberg and her neighbors." The report and video confirm the Consumer Product and
Safety Commission is taking complaints on smart
meters.



On December 18, 2012 a PG&E meter reader whistleblower tells the California Public
Utilities Commission judge that:

Smart Meters CAUSE FIRES.

PG&E is covering up the Smart Meter fire risk.

PG&E fired him because he was unwilling to keep quiet.

"Smart Meter Disaster" is an Australian TV news report on the meter hazards, including
fires.(From 2012)

2013 When 'Smart' Meters Kill: The Story of Larry Nikkel — Details Emerge of Vacaville,
CA Smart Meter Fire Death Larry Nikkel died in a house fire related to smart meter
installation in Vacaville CA. The burnt out computer, loud humming in the house were
classic signs that the smart meter was arcing. The case was settled out of court.

2/2013 FOX 5 Investigates: Smart meters spark controversy "I was walking to the
seventh tee, when the pro came up and said,'Jump in the car. We just got a call. Your
house is on fire," Michael Capetto said. He lives in Upper Makefield, near Philadelphia,
where the utility PECO this past summer reported at least 15 smart meters caught fire or

got so hot, the meters melted. Similar fires have been reported in other states too.”...”..the meter sizzling inside the casing like a piece of bacon”

3/2013 “Memphis Light Gas and Water Division officials on Tuesday told a City Council committee that “smart meters” slated to replace the utility’s traditional meters don’t cause fires....But problems with the metal electrical boxes, or “meter sockets” into which meters are plugged, could cause overheating and spark a “flash over” fire, they reported. Made of plastic, smart meters also can melt.”
<http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2013/mar/05/memphis-city-council-briefs/>

1/17/2013 Electric Meter Catches Fire at Winchester Resident’s Home



A Sensus Smart Meter caught fire on a Winchester TN home. The damage was contained by the brick siding. The owner, Brandon McClain is asking the utilities to pay for the smoke damage to his garage, the loss of his wages to deal with the problems, and the cost to replace the meter base. He states, “I believe the fault lies in the Sensus Smart FlexNet meters Winchester Utilities is currently using, or the utility employees spread the terminals when the smart meter was installed. My family could’ve been seriously harmed.”

11/27/2012 Fire captain finds hazardous power surges follow Smart Meter installations
Matt Beckett, a CA Fire captain stated, “Two years ago PG&E replaced that meter [analog] with a “Smart Meter”. Immediately following we noticed power surges in the form of our refrigerator motor intermittently speeding up simultaneously with our lights becoming brighter. As a seventeen year veteran and current Fire Captain this caused me to become very concerned.” The Smart meter on his house was replaced with an

analog, and there were no problems, until a new Smart Meter was reinstalled. This time he had two surge protectors burn out. Read more: <http://emfsafetynetwork.org/?p=9013>

11/2012 Michigan Is your electric meter dangerous? (see video in link.) Some say new meters are leading to fires: “Bonnie and Owen Medd said they never had a problem with the electric meter on their Ann Arbor home until DTE Energy replaced it with a new advanced “smart” meter. Then, it exploded. “The DTE man told me we were very lucky our house didn’t go up in flames,” said Bonnie.

The Medds blame their new smart meter.”... “After hearing about the fire at the Medd’s meter, 7 Action News started digging. We found similar fires are being reported across the country. Our sister station, WPTV in West Palm Beach, Florida, has covered several fires linked in part to smart meters.”

11/29/2012 Examiner: Something is still wrong with the smart meters Writer Norman Lambe outlines his concerns regarding smart meters and gas explosions. “A glitch in the construction of the meters soon became apparent to the installers, and created a situation in which arcing could take place creating a spark, and if a natural gas leak existed anywhere in the vicinity serious problems could result, as witnessed to by the San Bruno explosion.” He calls for a federal probe on the possible connection between Smart Meters and gas explosions stating, “ I believe it is time for a federal probe into finding out once and for all the responsibility for the natural gas explosions taking place to determine if the smart meters are responsible.”

November 2012 : A recent article recognizes the connection between Smart Meter installations in Reno Nevada and Smart Meters exploding and burning out appliances. According to the article NV Energy Gary Smith admitted to problems with arcing and burnt out appliances, stating, “What happens is sometimes in the panel itself, you can get heating in those clips (where the smart meter’s prongs plug in) if they’re worn out or damaged,” Smith said. “Then we get what we call a ‘hot socket’ and you’ll have arcing and you’ll have a flashover.”

IEEE Smart Meter Fire Reports “Obviously all companies with smart meter programs, and all their suppliers and sub-contractors, are going to have to take a close look at the issue of fire hazards. This is just the beginning of a difficult story. Companies installing smart meters already have run into a lot of consumer push-back because of concerns about privacy, security, and—sometimes—higher rather lower electricity costs. The last thing the smart grid needs is meters causing fires.”

In August 2012 GE recalled 1.3 million dishwashers due to reports of 15 fires. GE also makes Smart Meters.



GEORGIA Family reports smart meter fire. In the photo the homeowner holds the charred remains of a smart meter which exploded and caught fire on her home, causing \$11,000 worth of damage. According to the news report Georgia installed the same type of meters-Sensus- that have sparked fires in other states. (See video available here)



Smart Meter Causes Dumb Fire

“In June 2010, Shirley Bayliff was sitting at the piano in her suburban Illinois home, giving music lessons to a student, when she heard a “pop” outside the house before the power went out. When she and her husband looked out the window, they saw five-foot flames shooting out from a new General Electric smart meter their utility company had installed as part of a pilot project.”...“Since then, two more of the 130,000 smart meters Commonwealth Edison installed in the area have burst into flames, one in 2011 and one this last July, according to the newspaper.

Three states utility regulators investigating Smart Meter fires

“The Pennsylvania Utilities Commission wants more information about PECO Energy’s handling of its smart meter program, including failure rates of its meters, the number of overheating incidents and how many overheating incidents resulted in damage.

...Regulators in other states, including Illinois and Maryland, are investigating allegations of dangerously overheating electric smart meters and reports of meter fires.”

9/7/2012 Home Scorched by PECO “Smart Meter.” Fire Officials

PECO confirms to NBC10 that there have been 26 incidents of smart meters overheating

8/30/2012 Chicago Utility Company admits to Smart Meter related fires

The Chicago Tribune reports, "Commonwealth Edison (ComEd) confirmed on Thursday that three of its smart meters, which wirelessly relay power-use data between homes and the company, have been involved in "small fires" in the Chicago region."

Recently Maryland utility regulators held a hearing with four major electricity companies about smart meters. The Baltimore Gas and Electric Co. was reported to admit their company experienced five incidents of the smart meters overheating.

According to the Tribune, ComEd replaced 15 heat damaged Smart Meters, and is sending its meter designs for independent evaluation, before it deploys more meters next year.

8/25/2012 Woman wants electric company to replace TV (Texas) " Long blames the installation of a smart meter at her house for shorting out her flat screen and causing her microwave to act up. She also said her radio now broadcasts more static than music. "I left the house (to run some errands) and when I came back, nothing was working," ...It appears an electrical surge fried the TV set and might be responsible for putting the microwave on the fritz. At least, that's what Long said her electrician told her."



8/23/2012 Houston Smart Meter Fire " A southwest Houston woman is blaming a smart meter for a fire that left her home in shambles in July... Harwood provided KHOU 11 news with a document that appears to be from the Houston Fire Department. The letter states "an unspecified electrical malfunction in the electrical meter" caused the fire...." (article includes a video)



Home owner blames smart meter installation for destructive fire (Global TV BC News)
...”The family says the electrical fire shorted out no fewer than 20 different appliances, and a number of electrical outlets...”I got a panic call from my mom saying that there was a fire in the house. So I ran over and there was lots of black smoke. Luckily I could put out the fire out fast with an extinguisher.”...The daughter, who did not want to be identified, says the fire follows the smart meter installation by BC Hydro, and the damage is far worse than just the microwave...”Really anything you can name inside the house. All the air conditioning is gone, the phone inside the house is gone, the TV boxes, all the electronic devices are gone.”...



(article includes a video)

Philadelphia Utility Company Halts smart meter installation due to fire risk

8/12/2012 Power mishap damages appliances for Livermore residents

28 smart meters were replaced by PG&E when a power line replacement caused a power surge which fried appliances, TVs and air conditioners. “The surge of electricity ripped through 28 homes on Hudson Way in Livermore.”

“All these neighbors have to buy the items lost and then bill the contractor. These homes lost hundreds if not thousands of dollars of electrical items to the problem. PG&E spokesperson Brian Swanson says it all could have been avoided by a flick of a switch. “When the contractor was switching over to the new 21kV line, they forgot to switch the transformer from 12kV to 21kV,” said Swanson. ”

August 3, 2012 Fire guts Mission home after BC Hydro smart meter installed

Excerpt: “BC Hydro claims a Mission homeowner is ultimately liable for a fire that originated at the base of a smart meter one day after it was installed.

A report by the Mission fire department said the blaze, which destroyed Trish Regan’s house in the 7900-block of Burdock Street and leaped to the roof of a neighbouring home on June 15, originated at an insulating “lug” in the lower left corner of the meter base. The report says the terminal, which attached the meter base to the home, appeared cracked and “radiated heat to combust the wall at or near the meter base.”

The base is the mounting plate for the meter, which measures how much electricity a home consumes during each utility-service billing period. Electricity must pass from the meter through the lugs to connect with the house wiring.

BC Hydro maintains the meter base is part of the house and thus any damage or faulty wiring is the customer’s responsibility.”

6/20/2012 Canada: Residential fire erupts one day after a Smart Meter was installed.

Fire Investigators looking into the cause:

5/12/2012

A BLAZE ripped through the front end of a Moorabool St house (Australia).

” Witnesses said they saw smoke pouring from a recently installed smart meter just moments before the fire started.”... “But firemen later ruled out the smart meter as being the cause of the blaze.”

Alabama whistle blower alleges fire risk from smart meters. Sensus Qui Tam Complaint
According to the lawsuit, the plaintiff is an engineer and was an AMI smart grid project manager. He alleges the smart meters were not properly tested, and were seriously

flawed. He found that the Sensus iConA had a “tendency to drastically overheat, and melt or burn”. He was asked to keep quiet and was eventually terminated for failing to do so.

3/15/2012 Dunaway Paint Store in Petaluma CA, from the incident report:

“After investigation of the smoke source we found that old or faulty wire inside the conduit from the meter to the breaker box had come into contact with one another melting the smart meter and the mounting box of the meter. Some of the wood was burnt around the area as well. The smoldering of the wood and plastic over what appeared to be an extended amount of time caused the smoke in the building. PG&E was called to the scene to isolate the meter and shut down the power to the building . . .”

3/15/2012 Florida report: State Fire Marshal working with St. Lucie Fire District to review smart meter safety on Treasure Coast

“Kenny Nail is president of the property owners association at Parks Edge, where St. Lucie County Fire Chief Ron Parrish said the outside of a home adjacent a newly installed meter sustained damage Feb. 17.

Nail said he wants FPL to tell its customers how many house fires have started at a smart meter, instead of just saying the meters themselves cannot start fires.

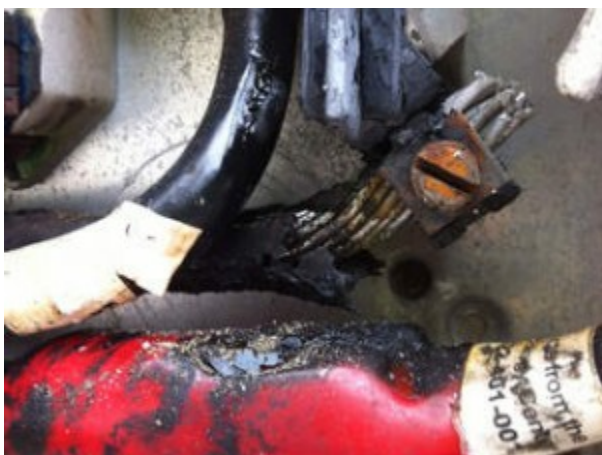
“Explain to me how a house can be sitting there 35 years, with that old meter spinning around like a top and not causing a fire, then a fire starts after a new meter is put in,” Nail said.”

3/1/2012 From Norman Lambe (LA Home and Business Insurance Examiner). “For myself, as an adjuster, I believe the Smart Meters are a real a threat to the safety of your home, business and property. I have personally worked two large homeowner fires in which the Smart Meters were determined as responsible. Also, they have been responsible for several small fires in which appliances and computers have been destroyed.”

Australia: Electrical Trades Union again calls for suspension of smart meter rollout

“THE state’s electrical union fears someone will have to die before safety concerns about controversial smart meters are addressed...The Electrical Trades Union has repeated demands to suspend the rollout until power companies commit to mounting all meters on flame-resistant boards.”

ETU secretary Dean Mighell said about half a dozen more damaged meters had “exploded” since last week in Hadfield, Coburg and Pascoe Vale. About 1700 homes in the Pascoe Vale area had been affected by power surges, he said. Power supplier Jemena has replaced six smart meters around Pascoe Vale that failed during a power surge in early January. Spokesman Scott Parker said a further 55 would be replaced by next Wednesday as a precaution.”



2/10/2012 From WPTV news: A Florida reporter, Randy wrote, “This the fire the smart meter started in my house. I am now stuck in a dispute between Honeywell and FPL. I had damage to many electrical items in my home due to massive power surges caused by the meter fire.”

2/4/2012 Victorian Premier Ted Baillieu has again defended the roll-out of smart meters, amid concerns they are causing a growing number of house fires.

Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) smart meter fire review concluded they could have been caused by faulty installation. “Hamish Fitzsimmons, an ABC reporter for Lateline, raised concerns about the meters after a fire at his Northcote home on the weekend...Fitzsimmons says the fire, which started behind the smart meter, caused extensive damage to at least one room of the house.”

12/16/2011 Explosion during SmartMeter installation leaves Florida utility sub contractor with 2nd and third degree burns from arcing.

12/06/2011 Melted smart meter at heart of SF house fire

12/03/2011 Nanaimo Canada mother of two left without power for two days after Smart meter smoked and caused a power outage: BC Hydro says its the homes wiring to blame, not the Smart Meter <http://youtu.be/9NO6wlx8UFc>

Some homeowners worry installing new 'smart meters' could spark fires

Florida TV news, Contact 5 investigates fire complaints from Smart Meters. The concern seems to be related to incompatibility between the new meters and older electrical home wiring. Florida resident, "Margie Albernaz woke up in July to the smell of smoke in her Greenacres home. "I went over to the FPL meter and it had caught on fire, it was all black smoke and charred," said Albernaz.

The report continues, "After some more digging, we discovered similar fire concerns have been reported across the country with different power companies and different brands of smart meters."

But the Florida utility assured residents that it was nothing to worry about, smart meters don't cause fires....however a spokesperson for the utility said they'd responded to 30 complaints related to meter fires and that "you could have wiring issues if you have dimming lights or power issues on one end of your home and not the other."

11/07/2011 In Australia, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade launched an official investigation into fires, linked to Smart Meters. They ordered "all firefighters to report fires, where smart meters are present and has advised officers not to allow power companies to take the meters from the scene. " Listen to the audio for more information at this site: <http://www.3aw.com.au/blogs/breaking-news-blog/fires-linked-to-smart-meters/20111107-1n2jz.html>

10/04/2011 Toronto Sun Pickering smart meter explodes. Worse, couple may have to pay for replacement.

9/29/2011 Smart meter leaves owners dumbfounded

After an attempted smart meter installation went bad, a British Columbia Canada home was left with no power, and the utility company told them they had to hire an electrician to fix the problem. "It is really upsetting," Rieke told The Richmond Review. "They're trying to tell you you're at fault, that it's a fire hazard and that you're responsible."

The article states, "During the installation, one of the four clips that connects the smart meter to the home's electrical wiring, inexplicably snapped off."

Palo Alto Power surge, raises questions about Smart Meters, "a good example of how sometimes the old way is the good way".

"Mindy Spatt, communications director for The Utility Reform Network (TURN), said the utility-consumer advocacy group received many complaints about surges damaging appliances when the SmartMeters were first installed. In the best-case scenario, the event in East Palo Alto is an additional cause for concern, she said." Comparing analog to the new meters, she added, "In the collective memory of TURN, we have not seen similar incidents with analog meters."



Fridge blows after smart meter installed

Canadian News reports an 81 year old's refrigerator failed minutes after a Smart Meter was installed.

<http://youtu.be/Xtcw4hgvgU8>

From

You

Tube:

"This is the aftermath of one of those new smart meters not being properly installed. The guy who installed it did not know what he was doing and caused the main electric line to the box to become loose and over time it ended up touching the electric meter/box casing causing a fire and a huge firework festival on the side of our house. If I was not home we would have lost the house and our 3 dogs. We are NOT happy with our electric company and we were NOT given a choice if we wanted the smart meter or not.

You can see on the front of the box where the wire touched and started the whole fiasco. Mind you the electric company when I called in the next day as instructed to claimed it was our fault and we'd have to pay for repairs. We aren't paying for a darn thing and we will be filing a claim with the electric company. Thanks to them I can hardly sleep now and I am paranoid beyond belief."

Action Line: Remodeler finds SmartMeter interference with circuit breakers

By Dennis Rockstroh of mercurynews.com Posted: 09/12/2010

Q One item you did not cover in your Sept. 7 SmartMeter article was interference with arc-fault circuit interrupters (AFCI).

This is a type of circuit breaker that code requires in new and remodel construction. Its job is to detect arcing, which has been shown to be a cause of fires. Normal circuit breakers will not always break when arcing occurs. If arcing is detected by the AFCI, the breaker trips, stopping the potentially dangerous arc.

Long story short, I did some remodeling recently. City code required that I use an AFCI for one of the bedroom circuits that was being remodeled. Some weeks after I completed the remodel, the AFCI started tripping. This meant I had to inspect each junction box and outlet to determine where an arc might be occurring.

Coincidentally, the problem started not long after a SmartMeter was installed toward the end of the remodel. Finally, after severe frustration, I phoned PG&E for help on this matter. A crew came out and looked at the AFCI breaker for a few seconds. One went to the truck and came back with a conventional meter, a mechanically driven version, and swapped it for the SmartMeter that was installed some days before. It took some prodding, but eventually one of the PG&E crew told me that they have been observing that AFCIs are sensitive to the meter's radio transmissions.

Dave Zittin, San Jose CA

Electrician Steps Up When CenterPoint Won't

Houston Texas News report on another situation where a new wireless utility meter has exploded. According to the article, "The power company not only refuses to fix the meter case that left Vallain's [A Houston Grandmother] family without power, but now representatives say the problem never happened. "They said it was never an explosion, and my granddaughter and I saw it, and he [the Centerpoint technician] jumped back himself," Vallain said. "

Appling Family Blames House Fire On Georgia Power Meter- News Video

According to this news article a Georgia family is displaced by a house fire, the fire department says it was an electrical accident, and the family blames the new Smart Meters installed two weeks ago.

" The Burns family was watching TV when the fire started around 10:00 a.m. Monday morning. Family members say sparks started flying from the TV and power box. Around the same time, down the street, another homeowner's TV reportedly started sparking and smoking. A daughter says their electrical problems started after Georgia Power installed new meters. Angela Dent, Appling, GA: "That's when we noticed the changes. It also happened at my brother's house...his TV's have been acting strange...popping and surging in and out...her lights have been dimming also."

PG&E recently installed 'smart' meters in my neighborhood. They do not tell you when they will come, but warn you to shut off things like computers that might be damaged when power is restored. When I arrived home, I only had power in my kitchen. The PGE repairman said that installation of smart meters was frying many meter receiver boxes. He was not qualified to fix it, and the power remained off for another 24 hours while PGE scheduled a qualified repairman to come out. Apparently this result is common in older subdivisions (mine was built around 1975) when the smart meters were installed. The older boxes, due to wear and age, burned out when PGE put in the new meters. The disturbing thing is that PGE will NOT replace the burned out boxes -they send out a guy with a box of spare parts, who cobbles together a sort of replica of the old box. I wonder

how many home fires will result from PGE's installation of the no-so-Smart meters. (CPUC Complaint, 11/2009, Concord CA)



The following letter and photo were sent to the EMF Safety Network from a California fire department captain (Ross) who saved his home from a potential Smart Meter fire in 2009. PG&E has admitted that Smart Meters have interfered with GFI's and AFCI's, but they have not admitted to any connection with a Smart Meter fire. Smart Meter Arcing Hazard

After a Smart Meter was installed in this Florida woman's home she said the meter "caught fire and fried my beautiful new kitchen" – over \$31,000 in damages to many of her home appliances. The Florida power company refuses to take the blame. See this video: Help Me Howard, FPL Smartmeter

The following reader comments were posted on the above online story:

(Boater39) "In our apartment complex, we had a fire last week at our sprinkler pump. Afterwards, I went to investigate and it was the electric meter that burned up. Took out decent-sized FP&L feeder in the process. I have an electrical background, and from my professional experience, whatever caused the meter to burn up was a dead short carrying a very large amount of current. Based on the damage, the problem was AT THE METER—not at the customer equipment attached to the meter. (like I said, I have professional experience). At the time I found it strange, until I saw this report on TV.... I will be sending some pictures to Patrick today—they can use them on whatever followup they want. It appears that we have a major design flaw with these new meters!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

(Jenny White) "After FPL installed the new meter at my dad's house all his wires were burned as well and the house almost caught on fire. The problem is those new meter."

(April) "I too had my smartmeter burn out and had a hell of a time getting FPL to fix everything. Their meter burned the wiring in my home behind the box that they said was

up to me to get fixed on my own and that they could only repair the meter and wires from the pole to the box. I had 2 electricians come out and they said it was an FPL problem. Ended up there is an outside company that installs the meters for FPL and they ended up paying for my problem after FPL denied my claim for them to pay for the damages.”

Fire Tears Through Cutlet Bay Home A family in Florida suspects a Smart Meter was the cause of their house fire. According to the article, ” Fire investigators have not released the cause of the blaze. A relative told Local 10 the family believes a recently installed Smart Meter may have started the fire. Florida Power and Light says the company will investigate the allegation...”

In Houston Texas, “Local 2 investigates Smart Meter fires” reports they looked into homeowners complaints of Smart Meter fires and found some people are left with no electricity and major damage to their homes, including burnt out appliances after a Smart Meter has been installed by the utility. See Video.

“Charles Phillips saw smoke coming from the transformer in his backyard one morning last November. When he went out to inspect the damage, he said he saw a CenterPoint Energy contractor at his meter box with a fire extinguisher. He told me it had caught on fire, Phillips said.”

“Inside Phillip’s home, two TVs were fried, his air conditioner and garage door opener stopped working, and all of the wires and cables hooked up to his electronics were melted from the jolt his electronics took when a fire sparked after the installer removed his old meter. Phillips was left with a total of about \$2,500 in damages.”

According to the article, Centerpoint, the utility for Houston Texas, has admitted the connection between fire risk and Smart Meters, stating there has been less than 100 problems. “CenterPoint’s LeBlanc said the problem is mostly in older homes where wiring is not up to code or something has caused a strain on the wires running into the meter box.”

Powercor, a utility company in Australia recognizes the safety risk from Smart Meters, stating, “A defect notice is issued when a wiring safety issue is identified. The defect may be identified before or during the smart meter installation or during the testing that

we must do before reconnecting the electricity supply. If you are given a defect notice, you will need a registered electrical contractor to rectify the defect and issue a Certificate of Electrical Safety.”

Texas Consumer Complaint: Three months ago, Centerpoint installed a smart meter at my home. Since then, I have been experiencing very frequent power outages in different parts of my home. I cannot even turn on my air condition since the power flow is not reliable. I am 64 years old and retired, living on a fixed income. I have called centerpoint numerous times and they have not admitted responsibility and tell me that I am responsible to fix the this issue which is a fire hazard as well. I have consulted with two different experienced electricians and they have told me that when a centerpoint technician installed the smart meter, the 4 prong male connection that plugs into the smart meter was not inserted correctly and he must of forced it in which caused one of the prongs to go bad and burn out. So I now know what is causing the so frequent power outages, but Centerpoint Reps will not take responsibility for the problem that they created. I have been living in my home for 24 years and never have had this occur. This is not a coincidence, How come this problem surfaced once the new smart meter was installed? We all know the truth, I will keep calling centerpoint and I am in the process of filing a formal complaint with texas state regulators.

Oncor Changing Smart Meter Installation After Fires “The Chief Executive Officer of Oncor says the company has a new procedure for installation of smart meters after two house fires in Arlington last week. Robert Shapard says old wiring in two homes could not support the new smart meters. The company now cuts power to the house while the meters are being installed...then as the change is made...electricians check the wiring to make sure there aren’t any problems.”

Reader comment posted on the above story by (Renee Callahan) “My mother had the “new smart meter” installed about a month ago. Since then she has had trouble with the lights blinking on and off. So on this past Friday (sept 17) she called TXU about the problem.They sent Oncor out late that evening while she was gone. Imagine the suprise she had when she returned home late with groceries and NO POWER! A note was on her front door saying....lugs in meter base need to be replaced fire hazard call back

when repairs are made we will restore serv[ice]. After several calls to TXU ,ONCOR(representatives were very rude)she was told that she needed to find an electrician to fix problem at her expense. My mother is disabled and elderly and my sister who also lives with her is disabled. Because this was after hours more fees were charged..a total of\$1483.66 to fix this problem that was caused by ONCOR because they decided to put in "smart meter"lf there was a problem with lugs,was this not noticed when they were installing "smart meter" or simply that problem didn't exist until installation of "smart meter"? So here it is 1:35 Monday afternoon and still no power. We are waiting for inspection then we can notify Oncor to have power restored. This is so wrong. These older homes are not equipped to handle these "smart meters". So why put them in homes that are older and most likely are senior citizens living there and they are on fixed incomes. Something is so wrong with this picture. ..."

5/31/2011 Some blame 'smart' meter for Portland restaurant fire

"PORTLAND, Maine— A small fire on May 25 at El Rayo, a York Street Mexican restaurant, was blamed on an electrical problem. But some people are saying there's more to the fire than a simple wiring issue. Central Maine Power Co.'s vendor had installed a "smart" electrical meter on the building in January. The fire broke out in the electrical box where the meter connects to the building. "Sorry for being closed at lunch. CMP's allegedly smart meter caught fire and shut us down all day," the restaurant posted May 25 on Facebook."

Electrical fire causes power outage at Coddington JC Penney store

JC Penney closes after another electrical panel explodes in Santa Rosa Coddington mall, the third reported electrical panel fire in Santa Rosa within a few weeks. Although the newspaper article does not report it, the manager of the store confirmed these were smart meters involved in the explosion and fire.

"The JC Penney store at Santa Rosa's Coddington shopping center remained closed on Thursday afternoon because of an early morning electrical explosion and fire that cut off power to the store, fire officials said... An electrical panel in a utility room had exploded and begun burning, sending smoke into the first and second floors of the building, fire officials said."

3 PG&E Smart Meters Explode at Santa Rosa Mall

April 7, 2011 According to the incident report from the Santa Rosa Fire Department on April 7, firefighters found the electrical room at the Santa Rosa Mall “charged with smoke” and “upon investigation found 3 PG&E meters that had blown off the electrical panel causing damage to the interior wiring of the electrical panel. A fire was still smoldering..”

The cause of the fire is listed as equipment failure and arcing coming from the switchgear area, and transformer vault.

El Cerrito Smart Meter Catches Fire El Cerrito CA Fire Dept Report

Smart Meter was reported to catch fire and was still sparking when the fire crew arrived.



Commentary by electrical contractor Lance Houston Unknown: Safety of New Disconnect Switch in Smart Meters: CPUC Meter Safety Testing Confirmation Needed.

Smart Meter Explodes in Oregon, comment from Stop Smart Meters.org “I didn’t know that I had a smart meter until it blew up on 08/12/2010! I am an Oregon PG&E customer, now victim. I want to know if anyone else has seen a smart meter blow up. It threw flames out and black smoke was in the air for hours. I called PG&E, but they said it

wasn't possible for a meter to explode. I wrote letters, called many times, but they said that they were too busy to come look at meter. For five months it sat there black and the house black also from the blast. I had to be taken to the Dr. because the blast knocked me down onto the cement. My doctor has referred me to a specialist. I have never had health problems. Now I have severe pain running through the nerves of the right side of my body. I can only walk with crutches now and only sleep two to four hours per night. The bills continue to go higher each month, and my bill says "estimated usage." Anon, Oregon

"VICTORIA'S [Australia] energy regulator has conceded smart meter contractors might lack required skills and is reviewing the qualifications of workers rolling out the \$2 billion scheme.

The Sunday Age [newspaper] can also reveal that, in the course of their work, smart meter installers have identified dangerous and possibly life-threatening electrical hazards in 3500 Victorian homes. Smart Meter Shock: electrical hazards found in 3500 homes

"When PG&E installed their SmartMeters on my duplex in Sunnyvale they almost burned the place down. All the power plugs had burned insulation and wires where the wires connected to the plug receptacle in one of the units. PG&E's SmartMeters are a safety hazard and any good judge would stop PG&E before more people are hurt and more property is damaged." Michael E. Boyd –President, CALifornians for Renewable Energy, Inc.

SPARKS in Oregon! On November 8th, 2010 Anonymous (not verified) says: "The smart meter that was installed two months ago sparked and made exploding noises. I am still getting a bill. However, after that last boom with fire sparks, I am sure it isn't running. I can't see inside the meter because the front of it is black now! I am going to let it sit there for a while and see if the bill continues to rise drastically. I haven't seen anymore sparks since the last big one. I am assuming my rising PG&E bill is created by the "energy fairy" at PG&E!

State of Maine Utility CMP Supervisor admits finding Smart Meter fire hazards Media report Russ Farwell, a CMP unit supervisor, said the technicians are actually discovering more possible fire hazards than the company anticipated, and informing customers of dangers they otherwise would not have known existed. He said, so far, they have discovered 70 to 80 electrical issues in the Portland area. "I didn't think they'd find that many," he said.

"Farwell said recently a customer's television was destroyed during a meter replacement because the man allegedly did not come to the door when a technician knocked and then left the television on during the meter change.

Media Report: Danville (Virginia) Woman says meter is a fire hazard " Kari Pyrtle says the meter, provided by the city, actually exploded and that it could have set her whole house on fire. The incident happened back on October 8, 2010.

"We were getting up, getting ready for school and for work," said Kari Pyrtle, a Danville resident. "All of the sudden the lights started flickering on and off and we hit the breaker box. Go outside and we could smell electrical burning. And we looked and our whole smart meter was turning black."

Fires Spark During Smart Meter Installations

ARLINGTON – Smart meter installations are being blamed for two house fires in Arlington this week. The problem isn't the meters themselves, but instead what's happening to electrical wiring.

The first fire happened Monday on Brook Hill Lane and the second happened Tuesday on Grants Parkway. Arlington fire investigator Morkita Anthony found that when the old meters were pulled out, the main electric feeds to the houses were accidentally pulled as well. "

What it's doing is making contact somehow with the electric box or the wiring inside and causing a short, which is causing a fire," Anthony said.

Smart meter fire reported in Canada: " The smart meter on the side of my house caught fire and per the Fire Inspector said it was the cause of the fire. Hydro came and took the meter saying it was there property. Who is at fault and if there property burnt my house

why should I have to pay my deductible and risk my insurance to go up? Will my insurance go after the Hydro company? Should I get a good Lawyer? ”

Media Report: Vacuum Shop Fire Raises Smart Meter Questions “There may have been warning signs that the electrical system wasn’t working properly before the 6:30 a.m. fire. Rawles and a friend of his, offshore crane operator Ty Allen, both said the remote meter appeared to have stopped working months before the fire. Rawles said calls to the utility went ignored.

Allen also described unusual marks on the meter before it caught fire. “It looked like it’d been hot or burned inside the meter,” he said.

“An incident report filed by the Bakersfield Fire Department the day of the fire appears to blame the meter. It said department personnel arrived at the scene and found “a problem with the electric service meter.”

“The meter had appeared to failed and shorted out causing arcing,” according to a copy of the report.”

Berkeley Fire Department Report: Smart Meter Fire It states, “Investigation revealed the newly installed PG&E Smart Meter in the kitchen was hot to touch and smoking, with a orange glow inside the meter housing”

The issue was turned over to PG&E.

The following scan of the Berkeley fire department report is a large file and may take a long time to load: Berkeley Smart Meter Fire

The Utility Reform Network: Are Smart Meters a Better Way to do Business? “They have shorted out appliances, they’ve caught fire, they interfere with garage door openers or security systems.” said Mark Toney of the Utility Reform Network.

Modesto Irrigation District Finally Comes Clean About Smart Meters | THE VOICE OF MODESTO. The original article has been removed. More info [HERE](#).

Meters caused GFI problems-MID spent over \$138,000.00 in overtime repairs to homes where the meters caused the GFI circuit breaker to trip causing service disruption for the homeowner. Modesto’s Head Electrical Inspector said while the people changing home

wiring weren't electricians, that it was the same as having a handyman in your home redoing the wiring so no inspection was needed, and that the homeowner assumed responsibility for the repairs. MID made the claim they weren't aware of any homeowners paying for their own repairs, but if the homeowner didn't know MID was at fault, they wouldn't have contacted them.

From New Zealand: Fire Prone Meter Boxes causing Concern

"Front line firefighters are concerned about the number of household power meter boxes that are bursting into flames.

There have been 67 callouts in Christchurch to electrical malfunctions so far this year, and new smart meters have been involved in three in the last five days. Graham Hobbs considers himself lucky. He was woken at 4:30am to find his smart meter on fire. "I lifted this up it was still glowing and smoking, and slammed it shut to try and seal it off." The following night Kelvin Dixon, who lives nearby, suffered a similar fate. "I pulled into my drive way and found my meter box on fire great amounts of smoke." Mr Dixon is a registered electrician and says the contactor that sits beneath the smart meter caught fire and melted."

PG&E Report: "During the second quarter of 2009, PG&E discovered a limited number of cases of SmartMeter™ radio interference with customer electronics, including ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) and arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCI). In response, PG&E implemented a policy to defer meter installations at customer premises that PG&E is aware could potentially be affected by radio frequency interference. PG&E plans to install an adjustable voltage meter to prevent potential interference at these recorded locations. These adjustable meters are currently in final acceptance testing at PG&E. Upon final acceptance and approval, a schedule will be developed to deploy these meters at the premises where installation was deferred." Pages 6-7 Advanced Metering Infrastructure; January 2010 Semi-Annual Assessment Report and SmartMeter™

Program Quarterly Report (Updated), Pacific Gas and Electric Company. Updated Semi-Annual AMI Report_Jan_2010-12

Online reader comment: "As a newspaper editor in little ole Cleburne County, Alabama we come out tomorrow with a story on a house which may have burned down because of a smart meter, another incident of a meter apparently getting so hot it almost burned along with circuit panel inside the home and people being told either by installer or power co that if they did not replace all the wiring in their home that the meter would indeed cause a fire!!!! I am told by a commercial builder that some meters may be faulty and allow 300-440 volts in on a home's 220 and 110 lines. We're seeing problems out here of burn outs in appliances, meltdowns of hair dryers, kitchen appliance , and a number of high-end electronics getting zapped. Goodbye Bose radio, goodbye wide, wide screen tv and see if the utility cos are going to pay for those items – don't think so!"
Link to news article

Electrical Fires reported in Georgia 2009 <http://stopsmartmeters.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Electrical-fires-Georgia-Feb2009.pdf>



Media report on a Smart Meter fire in Bakersfield. "Smart Meter Blows Up At Business"
"On Wednesday, a PG&E technician was called out to replace the meter after employees found the device burned up and lying on the ground. ..."Basically it was an explosion. I saw the meter on the ground and the face plate was blew off and the whole meter was blackened. Even the breaker box that housed the meter was blackened by what seemed to be an electrical short," said Vernon Nelson, an employee. Another employee wondered how safe the meters are in general, especially for residential families? ABC 23 contacted PG&E who said they are not aware of any smart meters catching fire or blowing up. However the PG&E technician told the employee as he was

replacing the meter, that he had replaced at least 15 meters around town due to the same problem they had, said an employee.”

More Smart Meter Fires stories: Coalition to Stop Smart Meters

Wireless Smart Meters and Potential for Electrical Fires

Commentary by Cindy Sage, Sage Associates and James J. Biergiel, EMF Electrical Consultant July 2010

Typical gauge electrical wiring that provides electricity to buildings (60 Hz power) is not constructed or intended to carry high frequency harmonics that are increasingly present on normal electrical wiring. The exponential increase in use of appliances, variable speed motors, office and computer equipment and wireless technologies has greatly increased these harmonics in community electrical grids and the buildings they serve with electricity. Harmonics are higher frequencies than 60 Hz that carry more energy, and ride along on the electrical wiring in bursts. Radio frequency (RF) is an unintentional by-product on this electrical wiring.

It may be contributing to electrical fires where there is a weak spot (older wiring, undersized neutrals for the electrical load, poor grounding, use of aluminum conductors, etc.). The use of smart meters will place an entirely new and significantly increased burden on existing electrical wiring because of the very short, very high intensity wireless emissions (radio frequency bursts) that the meters produce to signal the utility about energy usage.

There have now been electrical fires reported where smart meters have been installed in several counties in California, in Alabama, and in other countries like New Zealand. Reports detail that the meters themselves can smoke, smolder and catch fire, they can explode, or they can simply create overcurrent conditions on the electrical circuits.

Electrical wiring it is not sized for the amount of energy that radio frequency and microwave radiation. These unintended signals that can come from new wireless sources of many kinds are particularly a worry for the new smart meters that produce very high intensity radio frequency energy in short bursts. Electrical fires are likely to be a potential problem.

Electrical wiring was never intended to carry this – what amounts to an RF pollutant – on the wiring. The higher the frequency, the greater the energy contained. It's not the voltage, but it is the current that matters. RF harmonics on electrical systems can come from computers, printers, FAX machines, electronic ballasts and other sources like variable speed motors and appliances that distort the normal, smooth 60 hertz sine wave of electrical power and put bursts of higher energy RF onto the wiring.

Wireless smart meters don't intentionally use the electrical system to send their RF signal back to the utility (to report energy usage, etc). But, when the wireless signal is produced in the meter... it boomerangs around on all the conductive components and can be coupled onto the wiring, water and gas lines, etc. where it can be carried to other parts of the residence or building.

It is an over-current condition on the wiring. It produces heat where the neutral cannot properly handle it. The location of the fire does NOT have to be in close proximity to the main electrical panel where the smart meter is installed.

A forensic team investigating any electrical fire should now be looking for connections to smart meters as a possible contributing factor to fires. Every electrical fire should be investigated for the presence of smart meter installation. Were smart meters installed anywhere in the main electrical panel for this building? For fires that are 'unexplained' or termed electrical in nature, fire inspectors should check whether smart meters were installed within the last year or so at the main panel serving the buildings. They should question contractors and electricians who may have observed damage from the fire such as damage along a neutral, melted aluminum conductor or other evidence that would imply an overcurrent condition. They should also look for a scorched or burned smart meter, or burn or smoke damage to the area around the smart meter. Problems may be seen immediately, with a smart meter smoking or exploding. Or, it may be months before the right conditions prevail and a neutral circuit overloads and causes a fire. The fire may or may not be right at the smart meter. Some questions that should be asked include:

Were smart meters installed in the main electrical panel for this building? Problems may be seen immediately, with a smart meter smoking or exploding. Or, it may be months before the right conditions prevail and a neutral circuit overloads and causes a fire. The fire may or may not be at the smart meter. Any smart meter installed in a main panel might start an electrical fire in that building; it

would not be necessary for the unit itself to have a smart meter. The RF emissions from any smart meter in the main panel might trigger an electrical fire at any location in the building served by this main panel because harmonics can and will travel anywhere on electrical wiring of that building.

Is there damage at the smart meter itself (burning, scorching, explosion)?

Was there fire damage, a source, or a suspicious area around the neutral where it connected to the main panel or at the breaker panel?

Was the damage around a lug at a connection on the neutral conductor in the attic at Xanadu? Was there any indication of heating or scorching or other thermal damage around the neutral in the area of the fire?

Was aluminum conductor present? Aluminum conductors that were installed in the '70s are today recognized as more of a problem for heating than copper wire. Was the aluminum, if present, showing heat damage or melting?

Even before smart meters were being installed widely in California, people who know something about EMF and RF were expressing concerns that this kind of thing would likely happen (electrical fires due to overcurrent condition from RF signal). What is already postulated, and of concern, is that the rising use of equipment that put RF harmonics onto the electrical wiring of buildings may overload that wiring. Faulty wiring, faulty grounding or over-burdened electrical wiring may be unable to take the additional energy load.
