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## ComEd looks to future, tests smart meters in area homes

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January 11, 2010

BY MAUDLYNE IHEJIRIKA Staff Reporter

The future is now -- in about a third of the 131,000 homes in the Chicago metropolitan area ComEd has slated for its smart-meter pilot program.

About 45,000 homes in Bellwood, Berwyn, Forest Park, Maywood, Melrose Park and River Forest have been getting the meters -- touted for providing more information and better service -- installed since November, with Oak Park being added to the mix this week.

"We're on track to be able to finish up in May," spokesman Jeff Burdick said of one of the largest such pilots nationwide as utilities foray into the digital era of energy infrastructure and distribution.

The so-called smart meters -- at the front door of energy-efficient Smart Grid technology vital to cutting energy use and carbon emissions tied to global warming -- offer two-way communications.

The environmentally friendly meters will provide ComEd and its customers with various information about energy consumption in individual homes, eventually allowing customers to view daily use information online and reduce energy consumption and costs.

Among their benefits to the company are identifying outage locations and reducing the number of calls to customer service, ComEd says.

Approved in October by the Illinois Commerce Commission, the pilot's cost is being shared by all 3.8 million ComEd customers across northern Illinois, amounting to about \$5 a year per residential customer, and \$11 for commercial customers.

"In general, we think that a well-designed smart grid can be good for consumers. The real promise is that it can maximize energy efficiency, and that will mean great savings for consumers," said David Kolata, executive director of the Citizens Utility Board watchdog group.

"We're cautiously optimistic. But this is still a new area, and we're going to hold ComEd accountable."

Smart grid is the name given to the electric power grid when it's equipped with computer technology and two-way digital communications networking.

The smart-meter pilot targets two other west suburbs, Broadview and Hillside, as well as Chicago's Humboldt Park area and south suburban Tinley Park.

Once installation is completed, the meters will get extra features added midyear, and then a subgroup of 8,000 customers out of the 131,000 will be selected to test even more futuristic features, e.g., alternative rate-pricing programs, Web interfaces, in-home displays, home area network control systems and programmable thermostats.

### [The Transition to Smart Meters as a Test of our Love for the Status Quo](#)

From Environmental and Urban Economics

### [Stepping on the Smart Grid](#)

From CleanTechies Blog

The views expressed in these blog posts are those of the author and not of the Chicago

Sun-Times.

willmars wrote:

Energy efficiency is vital as it is the most economical way to reduce energy consumption. Visit [www.austinauditors.com](http://www.austinauditors.com) and click get informed to learn more about efficiency.

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franta wrote:

I mean I aint saying this is no scam!

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franta wrote:

Ummmmm I am all for not giving more money than is necessary to omed but REALLY what will an whole 5 dollars get you for a WHOLE year? Ten cents a week?

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tim99 wrote:

The meters are smart Com Ed is even smarter. Not installing this money saving technology, that has been available because it saves the customer money. Why does Com Ed want to save the consumer money?

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some anon d-bag wrote:

I have to agree with all your...Who is the Illinois Commerce Commission?The ICC should be called the Illinois Anti-Commerce Commission.Can anybody name the Director of the ICC or even a single board member?Of course not.Yet these are the people that impose fees and regulations that hurt us "common" people.They hurt commerce.In some back room,they decided to place a \$5.00 fee on all Com-Ed customers.All for the good of man.All to save the planet,of course.Whenever some state wants to make it so you have to show an ID to vote,we hear cries of racism and how it will hurt the poor because they cannot afford an ID.Whenever the price of gas goes up 2 cents a gallon,people get outraged at big oil.Whenever a bank charges a fee to use an ATM,people get mad at the banks.But whenever some unelected stooges place a \$5.00 fee on our electric bill for some "smart" meter,not a peep.I know,it is only a lousy \$5.00 spread out over a year,but still.We are being nickeled and dimed by our government.\$5.00 here,a dollar there,50 cents here.It all adds up.Do you ever look at your phone,gas,or electric bill?You will find all kinds of fees and taxes already there as it is.It is never enough.Think of how that \$5.00 could buy a couple of gallons of milk for kids or a box of diapers.Our founding fathers fought a war for far less.I am not calling for a revolution,I just wish people would stay informed and vote.Rather then spend a few hours a day playing games on a computer at work,read the paper and see what is going on around us.Pay attention to the politicians.Pay attention to where all our money is going.

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techspec wrote:

What about Bolingbrook, Joliet, Minooka, SOUTH of the 'city'. Do we still use sticks and firewood? Come on Com-Ed - we exist ya know!

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could be anyone wrote:

As with everything, there are pluses and minuses. For instance, knowing the square footage of your home, your thermostat setting, and the amount of energy you use running your air conditioning, you can determine how your home compares to a well insulated house using a efficient air conditioner. This information can be used to determine what course of action to take to reduce your power consumption and how much savings can be had by implementing improvements. Of course, from a consumer viewpoint it may be less economical to invest in the improvements, but from ComEd's viewpoint, it could make a difference on it's ability to deliver enough power to keep its customers supplied without having brownouts or outages.We can, of course, think of many negatives for this technology from a consumer viewpoint. The real problem is being overlooked and that is increasing population. The more people that exist, the more energy that is being used. This will continue until the strain on resources reaches a point where the standard of living decreases for everyone. I am amazed that no one discusses this population issue. It's impact on resource consumption and pollution is the cause of the problems we are having. Even if it were possible to reduce resource consumption by, let's say, 50%, it is only a matter of time that the population will double and the net savings is zero. Of course, pollution will double and further stress the economy. There's much more to say, but it's seed for thought.

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gh67 wrote:

My father lives in Florida and has one of these for about a year. He

talked to the guy that was putting them in. There they contracted out all meter reading to reduce labor costs. Problem was the outsourcing company they hired had such high turnover and provided so little training that meters were being read wrong a lot. That is why they went to the meters. They also promised that it was going to give all kinds of information to the customers, he has seen none.

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all your money are belong to government wrote:

Here we go.Big brother will be watching.This "pilot" program will one day include everybody.You can bet your bottom dollar,people's energy consumption will be monitored.If you use too much energy,there will be stiff fines.Mark my words.If you like your home hot in the winter and cold in the summer,be prepared to shell out hundreds more.Everybody must conform and have their thermostats the same,or else be singled out.They will probably even publish your name in the paper if you are an energy hog.You will be labeled for not being "green",you will be attacked for causing "global warming".A 21st Century scarlet letter,if you will.I wonder where the ACLU and all the other "peoples rights" groups stand on this issue??I alrerady see where the Citizens Utility Board has no problem with this,so who will be on our side?"Approved in October by the Illinois Commerce Commission, the pilot's cost is being shared by all 3.8 million ComEd customers across northern Illinois, amounting to about \$5 a year per residential customer, and \$11 for commercial customers."Gee,thanks.I do not want this.I do not seem to remember getting any information asking for my input.But of course,I will have to pay.All the clowns on the ICC are appointed bueracrats that are not held to account by way of election.They can raise taxes behind the scenes.Our wonderful government in action.We are no longer represented,we are all to bend over for the state.Or else.

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supa conscience wrote:

Phil you had better get to the front office and see what new jobs are opening up. You might be losing yours soon. HURRY!

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