



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT ADVANCED METERS

You may have heard information recently about advanced meters—sometimes referred to as "smart meters". Many electric and water utilities, including your own River Falls Municipal Utilities, are making use of this technology. Are you wondering what this industry shift means for you in River Falls? Read on for answers to some frequently asked questions.

Q. Is River Falls using advanced meters?

A. Yes. Following several years of careful research and consideration, the Utility Advisory Board approved a plan to transition to advanced electric and water meters. River Falls not-for-profit, locally owned utility is making use of advanced metering as an important tool for the business of operating our community's electric and water systems with our commercial customers.

Q. How do advanced meters work?

A. Advanced meters use a safe, secure and effective two-way radio frequency (RF) communications link that allows our utilities to provide proactive customer service, improve system reliability, and operate more efficiently.

Q. Why are these new meters being installed?

A. They will help our utility to operate more cost-effectively and to provide more proactive and reliable service to our customers. Advanced meters are an important tool in the ongoing modernization of our community's electric and water systems.

Q. Will my utility rates go up as a result of advanced metering?

A. No. Our use of advanced meters is not anticipated to have any impact on electric or water rates. In fact, this new technology will help hold down future costs.

Q. How can advanced meters provide savings?

A. River Falls Municipal Utilities' use of advanced meters will help us operate more cost-effectively. The utility currently meters 6,500 electric and 4,800 water services, and our current system requires sending workers out in trucks and on foot to complete monthly readings, conduct regular testing, and perform disconnections and reconnections.

Advanced meters can also quickly alert us to problems that drive up costs for our utilities and our customers. We will be able to more quickly alert customers to costly water leaks, and advanced meters also allow faster detection of instances of theft and meter tampering. Advanced meter data will enable our customers to analyze their electric and water consumption and take advantage of efficiency programs that will provide customers with more control over their usage and bills.

Q. What has River Falls Municipal Utilities done to help keep down the costs of this initiative?

A. River Falls is saving significantly by joining with the 50 other locally owned, not-for-profit utilities served by our power supplier, WPPI Energy. WPPI Energy's members are working together to cost-effectively share data management systems, expertise, support and licensing for our advanced metering software and systems.



Q. How will advanced meters improve my utility service?

A. Advanced metering will enable our staff to provide better customer service. Advanced metering allows faster detection of service related problems such as electric outages, power quality issues, water leaks, and potential sources of water cross-contamination. Transitioning to the new meters also helps ensure that our electric and water systems will stay in good working order for the years to come.

Q. Will my privacy be compromised?

A. No. As always, our utilities take seriously our obligation to protect your privacy. That will not change with the use of advanced meters.

Q. What assurance do I have that my privacy is protected?

A. Wisconsin Utilities are required to strictly protect customer usage and billing information, and River Falls Municipal Utilities works constantly to safeguard this data.

Q. Will the advanced meter make it possible to know what I'm doing inside my home?

A. No. The only information collected by an advanced meter is how much energy and water is consumed based on time of day, not how the energy or water is used.

Q. What if I don't want advanced meters at my home or business.

A. Efficiencies and cost savings achieved will be highest when all meters are advanced meters. However, customers may choose to not have an advanced meter. As advanced metering becomes our standard metering equipment, River Falls Municipal Utilities will develop a Non-Standard Service Meter rate as an opt-out of our standard smart metering equipment. Once approved, the Non-Standard Service Meter rate will be at a higher cost to customers opting to not have an advanced meter at their home or business.

Q. Are advanced meters safe?

A. Yes. While advanced meters have become the subject of considerable attention for their use of low-level RF, in-depth review of the scientific literature by the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that the small amount of RF energy produced by smart meters is not harmful to human health.¹

In the US, the Federal Communications Commission establishes the requirements for use of the RF spectrum and acceptable exposure limits for the public. River Falls Municipal Utilities' advanced meters, which are manufactured by Elster, comply with and are far below these requirements, as well as international requirements set by global bodies.

River Falls Municipal Utilities takes your health and safety seriously and would never install equipment that would jeopardize the safety and well-being of our customers. Our relationship with you is River Falls Municipal Utility's top priority.

Q. How significant is the RF signal from an advanced meter?

A. The low level of RF emissions associated with advanced meters is far smaller than that of other common household items.² In fact, everyday devices such as cellular phones and microwave ovens typically cause far greater RF exposure than advanced meters.³ In terms of RF output, River Falls Municipal Utilities' advanced meters typically compare as follows to other common household wireless devices:⁴

SMART METER
900 MHz



BABY MONITOR
7 X GREATER



Wii REMOTE CONTROLLER
30 X GREATER



NINTENDO DS WITH WiFi
180 X GREATER



Wifi ACCESS POINT
400 X GREATER



CORDLESS PHONE
1,000 X GREATER



CELL PHONE
10,000 X GREATER



Furthermore, RF exposure decreases with distance from the device. River Falls Municipal Utilities' advanced meters are typically installed on the exterior of a building, whereas much higher-emitting devices such as microwaves and mobile phones are often operated a few inches or a few feet from the user. In addition, while other common household devices emit RF signals far more frequently, or even constantly, *River Falls Municipal Utilities' advanced meters typically will only transmit a signal four times per day, and each transmission lasts for approximately one second.*

¹ World Health Organization. <http://www.who.int/peh-emf/about/WhatisEMF/en/index1.html>.

² Environmental Defense Fund. <http://www.who.int/peh-emf/about/WhatisEMF/en/index1.html>.

³ Richard A. Tell, Richard Tell Associates, Inc. (April 6, 2005).

⁴ Based on FCC 47CFR1.1310, which averages exposure over 30 minutes of usage. Comparative data provided by Elster.



Q. What if I have questions or want more information?

A. Our community-owned utility is committed to keeping you informed about this important initiative. We will provide regular updates at Utility Advisory Board meetings and customer questions are always welcome. For project updates please contact utility staff at **715.425.0906**.

Q. What is the timeframe for River Falls advanced metering initiative?

A. River Falls Municipal Utilities has installed advanced metering on many of the larger businesses in the community, as well as a sampling of residential homes and small businesses. This has verified the technology and processes that will be utilized during full implementation. With the approvals of the Utility Advisory Board and the City Council, we expect to transition to the use of advanced electric and water metering in 2019 and 2020.

Q. How is the proposed advanced meter different from what we currently use?

A. The new meters are much more efficient when compared to the old meters. The new meters use cutting edge technology that transmits less frequently than the old meters. Staff will no longer need to drive around town to read the meters. This eliminates fossil fuel emissions from meter reading vehicles and allows RFMU staff to better utilize their time by providing other high value services for our community.



At River Falls Municipal Utilities, we believe affordable public power strengthens our community and helps our neighbors. That's why, through WPPI Energy, we're partnering with other local not-for-profit utilities to share resources and lower costs.