

**PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY**  
**SmartMeter™ Program Modifications**  
**Application 11-03-014**  
**Data Response**

PG&E Data Request No.:	TURN_001-10		
PG&E File Name:	SmartMeterProgram-Modifications_DR_TURN_001-Q10		
Request Date:	March 31, 2011	Requester DR No.:	001
Date Sent:	April 20, 2011	Requesting Party:	The Utility Reform Network (TURN)
PG&E Witness:	Jana R. Corey	Requester:	Marcel Hawiger

**QUESTION 10**

Does PG&E have an existing program or option that allows customers to self-read their analog meters? If yes, please provide the following information concerning this program:

- a. What tariff provision governs this program/option?
- b. Please explain how the program/option works. Provide any documents describing the operating procedures for this program/option. Please explain the process for adjusting or trueing-up estimated meter reads.
- c. The number of customers who self-read each year 2005-2009.
- d. The recorded (or estimated if there are no recorded) annual costs for the self-read option in 2005-2009. Please explain the nature of the costs and itemize if possible.

**ANSWER 10**

Yes, PG&E's Plastic Card program allows some customers to self-read their analog meters, record their usage on a plastic card on a monthly basis, and display the card in a designated location at the customer's premise. The plastic card is read by PG&E meter readers on a monthly basis. With the deployment of SmartMeters™, PG&E planned to end the Plastic Card program because customers' usage would be read and transmitted to PG&E remotely. Attachment TURN\_001-10-1 shows the information about the program provided on PG&E's public website.

- a. On October 25, 1989, the Commission approved Advice Letter 1556-G/1265-E, which included the following forms used in the Plastic Card program:
  - Window Meter Card Reminder – Post Card (Form No. 61-7126)
  - Window Meter Card – Single Meter (Form No. 62-3005)
  - Window Meter Card – Two Meters (Form No. 62-3006)

The Plastic Card program is not specifically addressed in any PG&E rule. Nevertheless, under Electric Rule No. 1, Definitions, "Tariffs" are defined as the

“entire body of effective rates, rentals, charges, and rules, collectively, of PG&E, including title page, preliminary statement, rate schedules, rules, **sample forms**, service area maps, and list of contracts and deviations.” (Emphasis added.) Attachment TURN\_001-10-2 contains relevant pages from Advice Letter 1556-G/1265-E, including the forms referenced above, and the Energy Branch letter approving the Advice Letter.

- b. Attachment TURN\_001-10-3 contains PG&E’s Utility Standard S6008, “Customer Self-Read Plastic Meter Reading Procedure.” The Program, which permits the customer to read and report monthly meter reads to PG&E, is intended to address situations where access to the meter is not available due to locked gates, a hazardous condition, or family pets. The service is provided for the convenience of the customer and may be initiated or terminated at PG&E’s discretion.

Attachment TURN\_001-10-4 is a copy of the Plastic Card agreement signed by the customer. Failure to comply with the conditions set forth in the agreement signed by the customer may result in termination of the service.

Regarding the billing process, once a customer is enrolled in the Plastic Card program, a meter reader enters the information shown on the customer’s plastic card into PG&E’s billing system using the hand-held meter reading device. If the customer fails to place the card in the designated location and the meter reader cannot record the customer’s monthly read, the customer’s bill is estimated in the billing system. As described in Attachment TURN\_001-10-3, every six months, a PG&E meter reader reads the meter to verify the plastic card readings provided by the customer. These verified field reads are then used to true-up the current bill and make corrections to previous estimated bills if warranted.

- c. Generally, PG&E does not retain information on the number of customers in the Plastic Card program for more than one year. The number of participants in April 2011 was 24,352 and in April 2010 was 48,746.

In June 2008, PG&E upgraded its billing system to eliminate the “Customer Read Flag” when a meter is transitioned to “SmartMeter™ Read” status. Documentation from this billing system project shows that there were 95,002 Plastic Card program participants in June 2008.

- d. PG&E does not separately record the costs of the Plastic Card program. Meters read for the Plastic Card program are read on the same day as other meters on that route. Thus, the Plastic Card meter-reading cost is included within the traditional meter-reading cost. The annual unit cost per meter-read for 2005 to 2009 follows:
  - 2005 – \$0.76
  - 2006 – \$0.78
  - 2007 – \$0.81
  - 2008 – \$0.84
  - 2009 – \$0.94

Note that these unit costs include meter reading costs only and do not include administrative costs for the Plastic Card program.