

From: Cherry, Brian K
Sent: 7/21/2012 12:51:56 PM
To: Edward F.' Randolph (edward.randolph@cpuc.ca.gov)
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: Fwd: PBS NewsHour - How Smart Are Smart Meters?
Nice quotes.

Begin forwarded message:

From: News Flash <newsflash@pge.com>
Date: July 20, 2012 8:31:23 PM PDT
To: Real time PG&E coverage {PG&E Internal - #PRIVATE#} <Newsflash-Real-Time@pge.com>
Subject: PBS NewsHour - How Smart Are Smart Meters?
Reply-To: <newsflash@pge.com>

The *PBS NewsHour* aired a segment on smart meters, including PG&E's rollout in California. Helen Burt, Senior Vice President and Chief Customer Officer for PG&E, was quoted. Below is a transcript of the segment.

How Smart Are Smart Meters?

By Spencer Michels

PBS NewsHour, July 20, 2012

RAY SUAREZ: Next: a follow-up to our story last Friday about an Austin, Tex., neighborhood that uses smart grid technology to track and control its energy consumption. Not everyone thinks that's a good idea.

NewsHour correspondent Spencer Michels reports on some California activists who'd like to see the devices banned.

SPENCER MICHELS: Fairfax, Calif., a small, hip, politically liberal, environmentally concerned town in Marin County, across the Golden Gate from San Francisco, it's the home of Valeri Hood, a landscaper and activist who decided that the local utility's decision to replace her traditional gas and electric meters posed a danger to her.

She doesn't want a new one, a so-called smart meter that reads how much energy is being used and transmits the figures to Pacific Gas & Electric via radio signals. PG&E has installed nine million smart meters in Northern Calif., part of a \$2.2 billion program.

It has been touted as a way to save money and energy, because the transmitted information can be used to monitor home energy use. That allows residents to

use appliances when demand is low, reducing their costs.

WOMAN: So, just walking door to door, putting these on the door hangers. They're not smart, they're not green, and they're not safe and they're not legal.

SPENCER MICHELS: Hood and her fellow activist, Mary Beth Brangan, believe wireless smart meters emit harmful electromagnetic radiation, a contention that has spurred a major debate and studies to back up both sides. Hood and Brangan took up the fight against the smart meters, and started printing signs and petitions for several reasons.

VALERI HOOD, activist: PG&E has decided to do a wireless version, and they didn't need to be wireless. They could have been hardwired.

MARY BETH BRANGAN, Ecological Options Network: People have reported seizures. They have reported migraines. They have had trouble sleeping, heart problems, arrhythmias, a lot of symptoms from difficulties with smart meters.

VALERI HOOD: This was just pushed on our communities without any sort of input or education or anything. And it was, all of a sudden, you're going to get smart meters, whether you like it or not.

SPENCER MICHELS: They weren't alone. Environmentalists and others in several parts of the country have taken up the anti-smart meter cause, as utilities spend \$29 billion to upgrade their networks and install the new meters.

Hood lobbied the Fairfax Town Council, and after several meetings, the council decided to ban the smart meters. The Marin County supervisors took a similar stand, outlawing new devices, at least for now. More than a dozen California cities and counties have passed such legislation.

EDWARD RANDOLPH, California Public Utilities Commission: They don't have the jurisdiction individually to create a smart meter-free zone, or whatever they want to call it.

SPENCER MICHELS: Edward Randolph is director of energy for the California Public Utilities Commission, the only agency, he says, that has jurisdiction over the devices. Randolph says the PUC pushed the utilities to install smart meters.

EDWARD RANDOLPH: The vast majority of all of the input and evidence is that, you know, society is going to benefit from the smart meters.

I mean, the energy-efficiency savings alone in the long term for the state of California is going to be a large economic benefit for most rate payers.

SPENCER MICHELS: When PG&E began installing smart meters in California six years ago, its executives never suspected it would cause such a fuss. They said they considered gas and electric meters simply tools of the trade.

The meters connect diverse power sources into an efficient system, argues

Helen Burt, the chief customer officer for PG&E.

HELEN BURT, Pacific Gas & Electric: Well, a smart meter is really a basic building block of a smarter grid. And a smart grid is being built all over the United States to connect solar power and other pieces of intermittent renewable power into the electric system.

SPENCER MICHELS: While critics say the use of wireless technology contains a risk, Burt discounts it.

HELEN BURT: I will tell you, we know they're safe. We know smart meters

are safe. I believe wireless technology is safe. I have no qualms whatsoever about the safety. You know, I probably have seven or eight wireless devices, two of which are probably with me today. So I think we live in a wireless world.

SPENCER MICHELS: Engineering Dean Emir Jose Macari of Sacramento State University also defends wireless technology. He was part of the California Council on Science and Technology, a team that reviewed the literature on electromagnetic emissions, including radio frequency waves, or RF, a study often cited by PG&E.

EMIR JOSE MACARI, Sacramento State University: There is no proof of any health impacts from RF. The World Health Organization put out a report in 2005 saying there is no evidence of any harms to human beings from these technologies.

SPENCER MICHELS: But they didn't say that harm wasn't possible?

EMIR JOSE MACARI: Correct. We continue to say maybe more studies are needed.

SPENCER MICHELS: Macari demonstrated for us how the emissions from a smart meter can be monitored. He says those emissions are very slight.

EMIR JOSE MACARI: So, I could also be measuring emissions on my cell phone.

SPENCER MICHELS: So, how does it compare?

EMIR JOSE MACARI: Well, this is so much higher.

SPENCER MICHELS: Really?

EMIR JOSE MACARI: But -- by 20 times higher than what a smart meter does.

SPENCER MICHELS: And he says the emissions tail off.

EMIR JOSE MACARI: As we measure right here, and as you measure it further and further, the signal goes down exponentially.

Still, opponents of smart meters, like Joshua Hart, continue their fight at the Public Utilities Commission and elsewhere. Hart founded Stop Smart Meters. And he says the studies PG&E cites conflict with others showing problems. He says no studies have been done on smart meters, per se, but research on cell phones is relevant.

JOSHUA HART, Stop Smart Meters: The National Institutes of Health have found changes in neurological chemistry because of exposure to wireless. There are hundreds of peer-reviewed articles that show impacts on human health and behavior at levels far below what the FCC guidelines indicate are permissible.

SPENCER MICHELS: Hart is calling for a halt to the technology, even though PG&E is 90 percent through installing the new meters.

JOSH HART: We think there should be an immediate moratorium on the technology, pending a series of independent hearings on the problems that have been identified. And this needs to be a national and international halt. And we need investigations.

SPENCER MICHELS: The movement against smart meters has been joined not just by environmentalists and leftists, but also by Tea Party activists, who see the meters as an invasion of privacy, since they collect data on people's electricity use that could indicate facts about their lifestyles.

JOSH HART: The smart meters reveal how many people are home, what time

you wake up in the morning, what appliances you're using, even perhaps what television program you're watching. And this is all information that is extraordinarily valuable to third-party corporations.

SPENCER MICHELS: Do you sell the data to anyone?

HELEN BURT: Absolutely not.

SPENCER MICHELS: Do you share it with anyone?

HELEN BURT: No. Our customers own their data. We do not own their data.

SPENCER MICHELS: One thing Hart and his supporters have achieved is a provision that people who want to keep their old meters can do so, provided they pay a \$75 fee and \$10-a-month charges to opt out of the smart meter program.

MARY BETH BRANGAN: A lot of people consider it extortion to have to pay to not have something on your house that can harm you.

SPENCER MICHELS: PG&E's Burt says the company accepts the opt-out program, even though the numbers are small. But it means the utility must maintain two separate systems, at a cost.

HELEN BURT: We have got about five million households across the service territory. About 30,000 have elected to opt out. The rest of our customers are really engaged in a different way with the new technology.

SPENCER MICHELS: While that new technology remains controversial, a utility research group says about half of U.S. homes, 65 million, will have wireless meters within three years.

JEFFREY BROWN: In a blog post, Spencer further examines the dueling scientific claims about smart meters and whether they do or don't cause illnesses.

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