

Frequently Asked Questions - General

1. What is the Meter Replacement Project and why are we doing it?

As part of ongoing system improvements, Golden Valley Electric will be installing new meters over the next two years. GVEA's current meters were installed nearly 20 years ago. The new meters include new technology that will help GVEA operate more efficiently and improve outage restoration. Benefits of the new meters:

Reliability

We are able to communicate with these new meters, which help us to identify and diagnose problems quickly and more efficiently, which improves our reliability.

- Faster response time to outages by pinpointing the exact location of the outage.
- More precise information on outage details and restoration times.
- Reduced meter repairs and calibrations – new digital meters require minimal maintenance.

Efficiency

Keeping operational costs low, will help GVEA to operate more efficiently.

- With remote meter reading and reconnection, we can save time and money and reduce air pollution by having less vehicles on the road.
- More information will be available about GVEA's load patterns so more efficient and effective planning can take place.

Customer Service

With more detailed consumer information, we will be able to troubleshoot high-bill concerns, diagnose problems, and assist members with more efficient use of their power consumption.

- With improved technology we will be able to provide same day service to residential and small commercial accounts.
- Detection power theft will be pinpointed.
- Member will have access to usage data via an online member portal that will go-live after all meters are installed.

2. How does the new metering work and how will they be read?

With the new meters, Golden Valley can read the meters from our main office. Information from the meter is securely transmitted back to the co-op via a private GVEA datalink. The meter will also transmit information that will tell us more about the power quality at your location by sending alerts for outages, blinks, voltage problems and tampering. This information helps us provide more reliable service to you. Transmitting this information electronically means that a meter reader no longer needs to travel to the different areas of our service territory to collect readings. However, we will still need to periodically access your property for maintenance and safety checks.

3. What information does the new meter record?

The new meter records kWh readings, interval usage, the date and time of energy usage, voltage, temperature, the overall peak demand of the electric account, the number of times the meter has experienced a loss of power for any reason.

4. Will the new meter notify the co-op when the power goes out?

Yes. Meters are able to record outages allowing the cooperative to verify whether the outage is either on the member's side of the meter, or if the outage is on the cooperative's electric system.

5. Can the cooperative disconnect electric service using the new meters?

Residential meters have remote disconnect capabilities. Commercial meters do not.

6. How much is this going to cost? There is no rate increase anticipated in association with this project. Upgrading equipment on our system is part of our regularly scheduled system maintenance budget and Golden Valley actually anticipates a savings from increased efficiency and reduced truck rolls for meter reading and service connections of meters.

7. What day of the month will the meters be read and will my billing date change?

At this time your billing date will not change with this upgrade and members' bills will continue to be issued as per the regular monthly schedule.

8. Is this a "Smart Meter"?

"Smart Meter" is a term widely used in marketing and by the media. Similar to the term "Smart Phone", it can be used to describe a variety of different technology and functionality, but it doesn't accurately reflect what product is being used or the functions that are available on that device. For example, a "Smart Phone" could be referring to a Blackberry, iPhone or Android, and the services or "apps" available on each phone are unique to each user. In that same light, not all "Smart Meters" are the same.

Golden Valley is installing Aclara (formerly GE) two-way meters and Silver Spring Networks technology that will allow for on demand consumption information, outage detection and remote connect/disconnect capability. Meters cannot track and record individual appliance usage; instead the meter records whole-house usage, just like your existing meter.

9. What's the difference between the new meters and the old meters?

The new meters are digital electronic devices that offer two-way communication. Golden Valley has already deployed several types of meters over the years some of which already transmit meter readings electronically. The new meters will continue to display the meter reading, but it will be in a digital LED format. The biggest difference is that the new meters will have an electronic circuit board module installed. The module receives the kilowatt-hour (kWh) and demand consumption recorded by the electronics in the meter, and is able to transmit securely this and other system data back to the cooperative's computers.

10. Does the meter compromise my privacy?

Golden Valley has taken, and will continue to take, reasonable and appropriate steps to protect sensitive member information.

- Meters **cannot** track and record individual appliance usage; instead, the meter records whole-house usage just like your existing meter.
- Meters **do not** transmit "personally identifiable information" over the network.
- Golden Valley **will not** provide customer contact information or energy use data of its members to any other person/organization for commercial or marketing purposes.

11. Can anyone other than Golden Valley electronically read the new meter?

No. The meter and associated communication system are equipped with security features to prevent unauthorized access. All the information and data is stored within the meter and requires special technology to access it. However, the new meter will have a digital display so members can read their own meter on-site if they wish.

12. Are there any potential health impacts from a meter that can receive and send data?

Golden Valley is committed to the safety of its members. Research conducted by the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), the Utilities Telecom Council and others has revealed no health impacts from digital meters. The radio frequencies emitted by digital meters falls well below the maximum recommended in federal guidelines. Contrary to some misconceptions, the new meters emit radio frequencies (RF) only when responding to a request for data from the co-op office. On a daily basis, the new meters are idle 99 percent of the time and are only transmitting 1 percent which is about 36 seconds per hour. Compare this activity to a laptop with a wireless connection, which is constantly sending and retrieving data. A digital meter equipped to send and receive data has an RF density hundreds of times less than the RF density of a cell phone – and the meters are installed on the outside of your house, not next to your ear.