

September 1, 2010

Here is an update of what's been happening here. The City and County of San Francisco, Santa Cruz and Marin County Board of Supervisors, Sonoma County Supervisor Efren Carrillo, the Marin Association of Realtors, the cities of Sebastopol, Cotati, Camp Meeker, Fairfax, Sausalito, Belvedere, Piedmont, Berkeley, Richmond, Ross, Novato, Monte Sereno, Bolinas, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, Capitola, and Watsonville, the California Peace and Freedom Party, along with the Utility Reform Network, the EMF Safety Network and State Senate Majority Leader Dean Florez have all called for a moratorium, a ban, or are opposing Smart Meters. Watsonville and Fairfax adopted bans on Smart Meters in August, imposing, as an emergency measure, one-year moratoriums, which include the infrastructure (data collection antennas).

Smart Meters are being deployed in Santa Cruz County, despite all four incorporated cities in the County, and the County itself, opposing them and calling for a moratorium. Three of the cities have joined EMF Safety Network's petition with the CPUC. Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors decided last week to create an enforceable ordinance banning Smart Meters and infrastructure (this is the third action they have taken; the second was joining the petition that San Francisco filed with the CPUC on accuracy issues for a moratorium), and is rapidly working on that. At the latest, they plan to present it at their next Board meeting, but may call an emergency meeting to enact it sooner. People I have been working with in Santa Cruz County have been protesting at the depot yard where the Smart Meters are being stored, and have succeeded in preventing trucks from leaving to install the meters for three days.

There have been protests at the CPUC and people testifying at the hearings. CPUC Commissioner Simon said, we'll put them (the Smart Meters) in, and if everyone gets sick, we'll take them out. The CPUC has still not called a pre-conference hearing to set the schedule for hearing EMF Safety Network's petition.

Today I am giving presentations for the League of Women Voters and the Sustainable Carmel Valley group. Smart Meters arrive in Salinas in Monterey County in two weeks – this is three months ahead of schedule. So, it's a race to get the word out to as many people as possible. We are talking on radio shows, writing articles, giving interviews, and doing anything we can to let people know. We've got a doctor with an electrical engineering background who's given several talks. We've got the support of a health and environmental magazine on the Central Coast region, Connection Magazine; they've been running ads and articles every month since February. One person I know is going door-to-door in Santa Cruz County telling people about the meters and handing out signs for people to put on their meters; I've attached one version of the signs people are using. And others are handing out flyers at farmers markets and other places.

Mary Beth Brangan of EON has done several films of the CPUC protests and hearings, and did one with Layna Berman and Jeffry Fawcett (of Your Own Health and Fitness radio show) explaining Smart Meters.

Assemblyman Jared Huffman (southern Sonoma County, Marin County) is calling for an investigation in potential health impacts from the meters.

The more I learn about the meters, the more I am appalled I become. Just the privacy issues alone are huge. Our homes will never be private again. “The ebb and flow of gas and electricity into homes discloses detailed information about private details of daily life. Energy usage data, measured moment by moment, allows the reconstruction of a household's activities: when people wake up, when they come home, when they go on vacation, and even when they take a hot bath. SmartMeters represent a new form of technology that relays detailed hitherto confidential information reflecting the times and amounts of the use of electrical power”: Fairfax ordinance. Especially with the Home Area Network part of the program enabled. This is data mining.

The impact to low and fixed-income households is considerable. Bills often go up, sometimes doubling or tripling or more; this can be due to inaccuracy, and this may partially be due to more accurate measurement of every energy spike by the meter (that's one explanation by PG&E). High income people won't necessarily care and will be under no constraint to save or redirect energy use. If tiered rates are in place, people will pay if they use power during the “expensive” time of day. Those with certain fixed schedules will have to use appliances, cook, do their laundry during that time – they won't have a choice.

The utility companies can remotely disconnect power with these meters, including during peak times. PG&E has said that they will provide places for people to go if they have to turn off the power during, say, hot weather. However, if a person has no car, or is housebound or bedbound, or has pets, that's a huge problem. And what about their refrigerators and food?

With this program, there will be two-three microwave radio frequency transmitters (four when wireless water meters are installed) on every single home and building, depending if you get natural gas. There are two transmitters in the electric meters. No longer will we just worry about the cell towers in town, or the impact of our neighbors' wi-fi. These meters will be on all our houses and every building wherever we go. There will be no way to avoid it. And this isn't just ordinary pulsed microwave. These meters will emit huge pulses, like radar, of microwave rf. Southern California Edison figures show the peak power of the pulses at 229,000 microwatts per cm². This will be as often as every few seconds, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I haven't seen any hard numbers as to the range of the meters. Whatever the range, a person will experience rf from all the meters within it. And, as part of the mesh network, meters will also act as relays for each other, increasing the amount of time they are “firing”. Plus meters can put the rf on house wiring and electrical lines, creating “dirty” electricity – another huge health issue.

People are getting sick from the meters, and I have attached a few testimonials. There is a page at <http://smartmeters.transbay.net> and EMF Safety Network has a new health page. I talk to people on the phone, and they don't know where to go. Especially in densely populated urban areas, these meters are inescapable. For those who are already electrosensitive, it's frightening.

I've attached letters about the program, one I wrote to the Capitola City Council, as well as two in the community packet. Also, I've attached the report done for the state of New Jersey. They estimated that the peak energy usage times, when the electrical grid is strained, would only occur about 50 hours each year. And in New Jersey, it gets hot.

The meters don't conserve energy, and, as the Fairfax and Watsonville ordinances note, consumers can buy non-transmitting time-of-use meters now they can plug into their system to get information. The enormous waste of millions and millions of perfectly functioning meters and the resources and energy to produce millions and millions more is not green.

An email expressed to me that this is a market solution – hit them in their pocketbooks – for a market-based problem. Consumers can buy and use any amount of electric-powered devices they want. I saw an article about a report by the Electric Power Research Institute, saying that to meet the CO2 emissions reduction goal, without using “clean” coal or nuclear power, we'd have to reduce energy consumption by 40% -- very politically, societally, and economically unpopular. So, instead of addressing the issue at the source, instead of facing this very unpleasant and difficult issue with enormous ramifications head on, Smart Meters addresses it far downstream where it can do the least good. And where it can make some people lots and lots of money. Regardless of the consequences.

The long-term liability issues that the city of Glendale and other municipal utility districts face with these meters and this program far outweigh any short-term financial gain from stimulus or other funding sources. It's not worth it for them, and it certainly is not worth it for their residents.

Best regards,

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