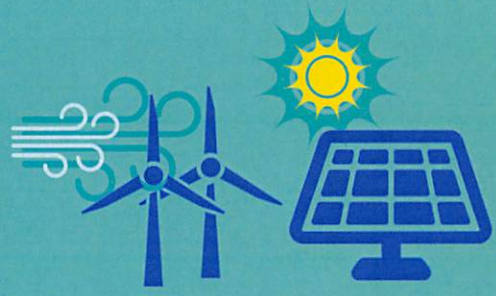
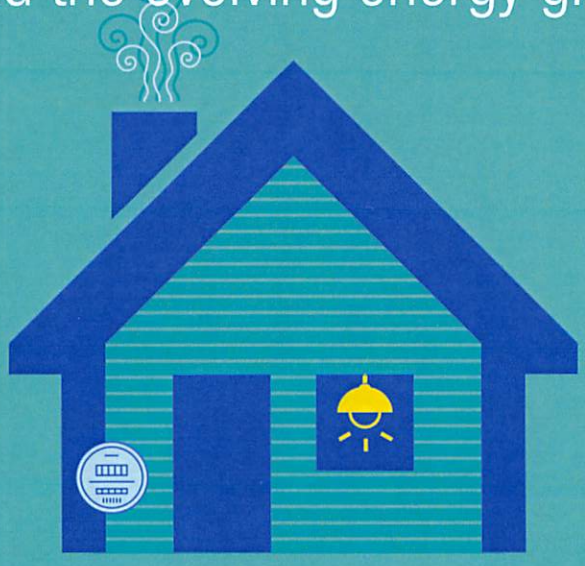
Investing in technology for a bright future

Two-way communication meters and the evolving energy grid



Outage management

Upgraded metering technology will improve service reliability. In most cases, the system will notify NorthWestern Energy of an outage without the need for a customer to call in. This allows our crews to return service to customers faster.



Sustainable future

- Support for additional renewable resources as we transition to an even cleaner energy future.
- Fewer miles driven by NorthWestern Energy vehicles. The new meters enable functions that require a trip to customers homes and businesses today to be completed remorely and eliminate the need for a vehicle with a mounted collector to drive past meters to get a read.

Customer Communication

The upgraded meters and modules communicate energy usage information 3 times daily. That information is securely sent remotely to NorthWestern Energy's data center for operations, billing and customer service. This means we can better assist our customers with their individual energy needs and more quickly detect and respond to power outages and customer inquiries.

Proactive outage prevention

We are already preventing outages before they start in South Dakota, where NorthWestern Energy's new meters on customers' homes and businesses use two-way communication. System voltage information is securely transmitted to the NorthWestern Energy data center and problems with equipment such as an underground line can often be identified before those problems result in an outage.

Tomorrow's communities

NorthWestern Energy's technology upgrade opens the door for innovations communities are asking for today.

These new meters will be the backbone of future services, such as remote streetlight control, time of use, prepaid metering and more. NorthWestern Energy can work with communities to offer services that are not possible with the current metering technology.

TECHNOLOGY FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE

NorthWestern Energy will install approximately 590,000 new electric meters and gas modules in Montana, part of a technology upgrade project that will enable two-way meter communication between NorthWestern Energy and its meters on customers' homes and businesses.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN MY METER IS CHANGED?

TruCheck UTILITY METERING SOLUTIONS

Authorized Contractor For NorthWestern Energy Delivering a Bright Future

Most of the installations will occur Monday through Friday during business hours, though there will be cases when evening or weekend installations may be necessary. NorthWestern Energy contracted with Tru-Check to install the new meters, the same company that installed the first generation, one-way communication meters in 1998 that are in use today.

Customers don't need to be home. A Tru-Check technician will knock on your door before the new meter is installed.

There will be a short interruption of electric service during the installation of the new electric meter. There will be no interruption of gas service during the installation of the new gas module.

A door hanger will let residents know their upgrade was successful. If the technician can't access the meter, a door hanger will be left with instructions to call to make an appointment.

Watch for a postcard in the mail, to let you know when Tru-Check crews will be in your neighborhood installing new meters.

ANSWERS TO SOME OF THE MOST COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEW METERS:

What are the upgraded features?

These meters allow two-way communication between NorthWestern Energy and its meters that are on customer homes and businesses. The meters read total energy use, kWh (electric meters) and therms (gas meters) about once an hour, and securely communicate the information to NorthWestern Energy's data center 3 times daily.

What kind of metering system does NorthWestern Energy have today in Montana?

NorthWestern Energy has been reading existing meters remotely since 1998. Our existing technology uses a meter read collector that is mounted in a vehicle. The vehicle drives around and wirelessly retrieves current meter reads. The upgraded metering technology uses similar wireless communication technology with strategically placed collectors mounted on power poles that replace the need for a vehicle.

What is the project timeline?

The 3-year project is beginning in the late spring of 2021.

How do digital meters help move us toward a more sustainable future?

The energy grid is evolving, driven by the need to support more renewable resources as we transition to an even cleaner energy future. The challenge with renewable resources is that they are often variable in nature and do not align with the timing of highest energy demands. Smart metering provides more data on grid operations, which will allow opportunities for the implementation of new customer programs and technology that will help balance the energy grid with renewable supply resources.

The meter upgrade project will reduce the number of miles NorthWestern Energy vehicles are on the road. NorthWestern Energy will be able to perform functions remotely that today require a trip to a customer's home or business. The meters read total household or business energy use and send that information to collectors located on power poles. This eliminates the need for a vehicle with a mounted collector to drive past customer homes and businesses.

How do digital meters benefit customers?

Upgraded metering technology will improve service reliability. In most cases, the system will notify NorthWestern Energy of an outage without the need for a customer call. This advanced notification allows our crews to return service to customers faster.

The upgraded meters will also gather total energy use on an interval basis to address customer questions related to bills and opportunities for energy savings.

How do the upgraded meters benefit NorthWestern Energy?

The upgraded meters and modules communicate energy use information 3 times daily. That information is sent remotely to NorthWestern Energy's data center for operations, billing and customer service. This means we can better assist our customers with their individual energy needs and more quickly detect and respond to power outages and customer inquiries.

What happens to the electric meter and gas module on my home or business now?

NorthWestern Energy has a contract to recycle the electric meters and gas modules in use now when new meters and modules are installed.

Will I have to pay for the meter?

No. The electric meters and gas modules are purchased and owned by NorthWestern Energy. They are part of our infrastructure, similar to our power poles and transformers.

How are all these new advances possible?

Hear NorthWestern Energy Vice President Distribution Curt Pohl explain how technology is transforming the electric energy environment. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EAaswPyMsc&t=504s

How is COVID-19 impacting this project?

NorthWestern Energy and our partner installation company, Tru-Check, are following CDC guidelines, including social distancing and wearing a mask while interacting with our customers. Safety of our employees, our partner employees and our customers is the top priority.

QUESTIONS?

NorthWesternEnergy.com/meters,
meters@northwestern.com
1-800-486-4280.

NorthWestern Energy
Delivering a Bright Future