

## About smart meters

A major upgrade of Victoria's electricity infrastructure means that all households and small businesses in Melbourne and throughout the state are scheduled to have their existing meter upgraded to a new smart meter. The use of smart meters is now providing benefits that are not available with the accumulation meters.

### Smart meter benefits

Smart meters provide data that enable customers to make choices about how much energy they use by allowing them to access accurate real-time information about their electricity consumption.

Unlike the old meters they replace, smart meters are up to date two-way, digital communication systems that record electricity usage every 30 minutes and automatically send this data to a customer's electricity distributor, virtually bringing an end to estimated bills and manual meter readings.

Taking up the option of new [flexible electricity pricing](#), connecting or disconnecting electricity, switching to a new electricity retailer or feeding electricity back in to the grid from roof-top solar panels, are cheaper and easier with a smart meter. Customers no longer need to wait for their next scheduled meter reading when switching electricity companies, making services like this quicker and cheaper. For example, when a customer moves house, the charge for meter reading reduces from around \$25 to approximately \$5 with smart meters.

Additionally, Victorian electricity customers with a remotely-read smart meter now have the option of choosing between flat rates and new flexible electricity pricing. Flexible pricing means different rates for electricity at different times of the day. For more details on flexible pricing, please visit the [Switch On website](#).

### Smart meters - how do they work?

Smart meters measure and record how much electricity a household or business is using at 30 minute intervals. There are different smart meter models, but the basic functions are the same.

Smart meters communicate meter readings directly to electricity distributors, eliminating the need for someone to come out and read meters – whether that is required for each bill, to change electricity retailers or to reconnect power when customers move house. Not only does this reduce fees, but electricity bills will also be more accurate – virtually eliminating estimated bills.

## Customer access to accurate information

Using a [web portal](#) or an [in-home display](#) connected to their smart meter, householders and businesses are able to access accurate and detailed information about their electricity use. This information is helping consumers identify ways to save electricity, thereby reducing their energy costs. It also helps consumers to compare electricity pricing offers from competing providers to make sure they are getting the best deal. More information on this price comparison can be accessed on the [Switch On website](#).

## Locating blackouts and restoring power

Smart meters can notify an electricity distributor in real-time if a premise's power is out.

These outage alerts can speed up power reconnection because the source of the problem can be pinpointed instantly, allowing repair crews to be prioritised appropriately and repairs to begin sooner.

Smart meters can then verify whether power has been restored to all meters.

## Communicating with customers

Electricity companies can use smart meter technology to help keep the public informed quickly and more accurately. For example, they can better advise the public about the precise locations of power outages resulting from storms and bushfires.

## Responsibility for the smart meter rollout

Smart meters are installed by Victoria's five electricity distributors – CitiPower, Jemena, Powercor, SP AusNet and United Energy – which own and manage the poles and wires that deliver power to homes and businesses across Melbourne and throughout the state.

Electricity meters have always been the property of the electricity distributors, who are therefore allowed to replace their equipment. Property owners are obliged to provide reasonable access to their property for this to occur.

If a smart meter has not yet been installed at your premises, your distributor will contact you prior to its installation to let you know the time period during which their meter installer will visit your property. You do not need to be present for the installation of the

meter, but should you wish to make special arrangements please contact the distributor (or their nominated service provider) on the phone number provided in their letter.

To find out who your electricity distributor is, visit the Government's [Energy and Resources website](#) or phone the Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

## Why electricity meters need an upgrade

With rising electricity prices, there is a need to give consumers greater control over their energy consumption. New smart meter technology provides real-time information to customers through devices such as in-home displays and web portals, and provide half-hourly consumption data to electricity distributors – who then pass that information on to the customer's electricity retailer.

## Smart meter rollout is continuing

It is the Government's policy that smart meters are currently, and will continue to be, the standard meter for Victoria. It is intended that all premises in Victoria will have a smart meter in the long term.

To encourage the electricity distribution businesses to complete outstanding installations as soon as possible, new regulations announced in mid-November 2013 will require them to continue to install smart meters after the end of 2013. If a distribution business has not attempted to install a smart meter in a Victorian business or home by 30 June 2014, the customer at that premises will be entitled to a rebate provided the customer has not refused the installation of a smart meter.

For the small number of customers who continue to refuse a smart meter, from March 2015 distributors will be able to recover the cost of running a separate metering service.

Customers are encouraged to discuss the upcoming installation of a smart meter with their [distributor](#) if they have any concerns or questions.