

## Smart Meter Makes Energy Debut

By Paul Gibson



A small company based in the UK has come up with an exciting new way to combat the crisis, at least from a cost management perspective. Introducing the new Smart Meter produced by a company called First Utilities.

The meter itself is a wireless device that reads and measures both electric and gas consumption in any household. The unique wireless device is not yet on the market, but they are doing a pilot in York, in the UK.

So what are some of the nuances of “meter reading”? For starters, the new device will have startling ramifications that will save fuel companies money in more ways than one. The traditional profession of “meterman” may now be a thing of the past. While energy and electric companies will need to keep some personnel on board for installation and inspection purposes, energy companies are going to save billions of pounds. The measuring feature will allow companies to bill their customers more accurately, with fewer infrastructures needed for daily processing.

At any given time of day, this new device will send an update to a centralised computer center with a daily reading of both gas and electric consumption. The service comes complete with consumption level readings on an hourly basis. That means that consumers can access a website and see how much energy they are consuming during the day or night and also how much their fuel bill will be at the end of the month. Now that’s a Smart Meter!

In an age where energy efficiency, supply and demand are constantly under fire, this device may be the answer for consumers across the globe. For example, take a normal household appliance that consumes electricity like the fridge. One consumer in York, testing the Smart Meter, calculated that the electric consumption of the fridge alone was costing him 250 pounds a year. What did he do? He went out and bought a new fridge and tested consumption levels again. Now he is spending a little over 40 pounds a year. The device is also used to measure consumption for any household appliance, like a television set. The meter reads and measures the consumption of your television and registers that information on a small screen so you can actually see the information yourself.

It sounds too good to be true, doesn’t it? Now come the drawbacks: not many actually - there is a minimal “cost of installation” that rounds about 99 pounds, but First Utilities foresees that one-time fee to gradually diminish to a few pounds as demand and use of the new service grows.

All in all, the Smart Meter gets five stars from the Business Weekly!