



March 25, 2016

\*\*\*CONSUMER ALERT\*\*\*

**MADIGAN: GET SMART ABOUT SMART METERS*****Attorney General Urges Consumers to Understand Smart Meter Data, its Benefits and Potential Pitfalls***

**Chicago** — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today issued a consumer alert urging Illinois residents to do their homework on smart meters – how they work, what type of data they collect, how the data can be used and if you authorize it, who can access it. Smart meters may help households lower electricity bills if the data is monitored and used properly, but Madigan warned that special packages that utility companies market don't always result in savings.

Madigan urged consumers to make sure they understand and monitor their smart meter data before sharing it with any third parties or signing up for new electricity plans. Consumers should also be aware that sharing smart meter data may open them up to a deluge of advertising and special offers from alternative electricity suppliers. Alternative electricity suppliers – companies that sell electricity to ComEd and Ameren customers – have begun efforts to persuade consumers to share this data with them. If a consumer agrees to share their smart meter data, the alternative supplier will likely use it to send frequent advertising and special offers for programs that may not actually save consumers money.

"Smart meters are new and many people are unaccustomed to using them," Madigan said. "Learning how to read and monitor the data to change your energy usage habits is the only sure way to lower electricity bills. Providing smart meter data to an alternative electricity supplier will not guarantee savings, but it will expose you to relentless advertising and marketing pitches."

Smart meters are being installed at homes across Illinois to modernize how the state's electricity utilities, including ComEd and Ameren, measure electricity usage. These meters digitally record information that may help consumers better understand their energy usage habits. In turn, the utility companies can use the data to offer special pricing programs to those customers who are able to closely monitor their usage and change their energy habits.

Madigan offers a few important points about smart meters:

- A "smart meter" is a wireless device that digitally records how much electricity you use in short intervals, providing a precise look at your energy usage habits.
- Having a smart meter does not – on its own – lower your electricity usage or lower your electricity bill.
- The data provided by a smart meter can only lower your electricity costs if you first learn how to read the data, then take the time to monitor your electricity usage and ultimately change your energy usage habits.
- **ComEd and Ameren are not allowed to share your smart meter data with alternative electricity suppliers or other third parties unless you sign an authorization allowing them to do so.**
- If you have a smart meter, an alternative electricity supplier may contact you by phone, by mail, or in person to persuade you to sign an authorization form and share your smart meter data for the previous two years, and for the next two years.
- **Beware that signing an authorization to provide smart meter data may lead to solicitations from alternative electricity suppliers about programs that may or may not reduce your electricity bill.**
- **It is entirely up to you whether you share any smart meter data with any third party.**

- If you decide to share your smart meter data, an alternative electricity supplier will have access to it until your service ends or for six months after you sign the authorization, whichever occurs later.

If you are thinking of sharing smart meter data with an alternative electricity supplier, consider the following:

- Smart meter data can reveal details about your life. Spikes in electricity use may indicate when you are home, while low use may indicate you are not home.
- Only sign an authorization form if you are comfortable sharing your name, account number, and electricity data. Be sure you understand how to terminate your authorization if you change your mind.
- You may revoke your authorization at **any time**.

For more information on smart meters and other public utility matters, please visit Attorney General Madigan's Public Utilities Resources page at [http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/consumers/public\\_utilities.html](http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/consumers/public_utilities.html) or call Attorney General Lisa Madigan's Consumer Fraud Bureau:

<b>Chicago</b>	<b>Springfield</b>	<b>Carbondale</b>
1-800-386-5438	1-800-243-0618	1-800-243-0607
TTY: 1-800-964-3013	TTY: 877-844-5461	TTY: 877-675-9339

Spanish Language Toll-Free Hotline: 1-866-310-8398

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