

## **AMI FAQ's**

### **What is an AMI meter?**

AMI stands for Automated Metering Infrastructure. It is digital electric, water, or gas meter equipped with wireless communication technology. The AMI meters collect usage data electronically daily as opposed to a monthly reading by a meter reader. The AMI meter transmits these readings remotely over a private, secure wireless radio network.

### **Why are the traditional meters being replaced?**

AMI meters represent a significant improvement over previous metering technology. These AMI meters will allow the City of Boerne Utilities to have better billing and consumption data. This will one day be available to customers as well.

### **Will customer account and usage information remain secure and confidential?**

Yes. City of Boerne Utilities is required to comply with all federal laws regarding the privacy, protection, and disclosure of personal and billing information.

### **Do AMI meters use radio frequency communications? Is it safe?**

Yes. They do use a radio frequency to send data from the meter to the utility billing department. All communication equipment used for the AMI system complies with federal licensing requirements and is considered safe. According to the California Council on Science and Technology, when installed properly and maintained, they result in much smaller levels of radio frequency exposure than many existing common household electronic devices, like cell phones, microwave ovens and baby monitors.

Radio Frequency (RF) fields from AMI meters have been studied and found to emit very low fields and then only intermittently. Any exposure to humans would be extremely small. There are no known adverse biological effects from these small fields. To provide some perspective, under typical operating conditions, an individual meter would transmit for approximately 45 minutes over a 20-year operating life. This should provide significantly less RF exposure than a single cellular phone call of the same length.

### **Will the communications system interfere with home equipment?**

All communications equipment used for AMI meets criteria set by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The AMI meter and system operates on its own frequency and should not interfere with any equipment inside a home or business.

### **Will a meter reader still need to visit to read the meter?**

The City of Boerne staff will not be on site to read meters monthly but will continue to need access to the meter for periodic safety and quality assurance testing as well as inspections and maintenance.

### **Will this affect meter reader jobs?**

No, not for existing personnel. Our meter readers are being retrained to be meter technicians and will continue to be a vital part of our Customer Service & Billing Department. The AMI project has allowed the city to maintain existing staff levels even with the growth in meters over the last 5 years and will continue to help defer or delay the need to add staff.

### **What are the benefits of the AMI meter?**

Improved reliability – AMI meters will automatically provide outage status alerts indicating potential outage locations and faster problem resolution.

Enhanced Customer Service & Conservation – AMI meters will be read remotely providing faster and more accurate readings. Trips by meter technicians to individual properties will become rare events, and it will allow our staff to help customers troubleshoot high bills and improve conservation efforts by providing information about their consumption patterns.

Leak detection & resolution improvement – Water leaks can be detected earlier due to the availability of more frequent meter readings and time of day usage information.

### **Have the meters been tested for accuracy?**

Yes. The accuracy of the equipment used by the AMI meter manufacturer conforms to standards set by the National Electric Manufacturers Association (NEMA) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and ongoing quality assurance testing will take place.

### **Do I own the meter?**

No. The AMI meter is owned by the City of Boerne Utilities just as it is today.

### **Can I purchase and install or remove my own meter?**

No. It is illegal and unsafe to do so. The City of Boerne owns and maintains the metering equipment. This includes electric, gas, and water meters used for measurement and billing, and other equipment such as transformers on the ground or on a pole. Removing or tampering with City of Boerne property creates a safety issue, which may result in termination of service, and is considered a crime. If done improperly it can result in serious injury or death.

**Can a customer opt-out of receiving the AMI meter?**

No, not at this time. All of our customers will be equipped with the new meters. The efficiency of our billing, technology and utility system operations depend upon having an integrated system. The absence of AMI meters in the system would create “holes” in utility consumption data which hurts the overall performance of the system.

**How often will meter data be collected?**

Meter data is collected in 1 hour intervals.