

STERLING NEWS

Meters, generators topics of SMLD seminars

By DANIELLE RAY

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The Sterling Municipal Light Department is offering two seminars to their customers that will introduce them to the benefits of the new Smart Meter system that will be installed and discuss residential-generator use.

The first seminar offered is on the SMLD's upcoming meter technology known as the Advanced Meter Interface, or Smart Meters. This session will be held Thursday, Oct. 22, from 4-5 p.m. Customers will learn about the new Smart Meter system benefits as well as what its installation may mean to them. Later this quarter, the SMLD will begin installing the meters for all 3,700 of its customers.

"The benefits are numerous and will evolve as the technology expands. Some present benefits will be automatic meter reads for the SMLD, quicker outage detection, and isolation. Also, in the future, customers may view their usage patterns in real time," said SMLD Office Administrator Sandy Pellecchia.

The cost of each meter is approximately \$110 and it is being absorbed by the SMLD's capital fund. Meter installation will be done as efficiently as possible in the normal reading schedule, said Pellecchia.

The second seminar, which will focus on residential generator use, will be on Thursday, Nov. 19, from 4-5 p.m., and information presented will include what residential generators are, where and how to buy them and directions on how to use them.

"After the 2008 December ice storm, winter-preparedness is still atop everyone's mind. The SMLD identified that some of our customers used residential generators [during the storm] and others wanted to, but feared them. It is our goal to help our customers get ready for winter and whatever it may bring. One opportunity is to develop education on what residential generators are, where and how to buy them and how to use them safely and confidently," said Pellecchia.

The SMLD has been working steadily to repair its power system since the ice storm. The entire power

system, which includes the large substation on Chocksett Road, has largely been repaired, though pole replacements, wire replacements, and service drop replacements will continue over the coming months.

"From the SMLD's standpoint, we learned that communication prior to, during and post storm was the key to getting through a severe storm. We used press releases and radio announcements to update all customers of storm repair status. In addition, the 2008 December ice storm helped the SMLD to clearly see the need to define who was responsible for the equipment on a typical residential home," Pellecchia said.

"Continuous customer education is a focus of ours. There are a lot of topics out there and if we can address any questions or misinformation, it may help customers to make informed decisions."

Call the SMLD Customer Service Department at 978-422-8267 for more information about the upcoming educational seminars, stop by their 50 Main St. office, or visit energystirling.com.

SMLD year-end discount

The Sterling Municipal Light Department is offering an extended year-end, early payment discount of 20 percent for November 2009, December 2009, January 2010 and February 2010. To receive these discounts, you must be eligible. Your billing statement will indicate your discount date if applicable. You must pay in full, at the SMLD, by 3:30 p.m. on (or before) your discount date.