

THE ENERGY FIX

Purported smart meter fires: how power industry can get the facts, manage the risks

Written by theenergyfix on October 5, 2012

- Underwriters Lab (UL) has recently been engaged to do safety testing on these smart meters by some utilities. While presently there is not a specific meter safety test protocol by UL, they are modeling these tests after the electric vehicle charging specification (UL 2735).

Testing Starts AFTER Houses Burn Down!

They admit they don't have a safety test for the Meters



The not so smart meter



Norman Lambe

LA PSYCHIC AND ESPYRICAL PSYCHIC EXAMINER
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**Adjusters Admit
Meters
Are to Blame**

For myself, as an adjuster, I believe the Smart Meters are a real a threat to the safety of your home, business and property. I have personally worked two large homeowner fires in which the Smart Meters were determined as responsible. Also, they have been responsible for several small fires in which appliances and computers have been destroyed.



Smart Meters

Peco swaps meter makers, moves ahead with installations

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PECO Resumes Meter Installation Work

Company continues support of PA Act 129

PHILADELPHIA (October 9, 2012) – Following its own internal investigation and additional scientific analysis and testing by independent experts, PECO will resume meter installation work with Landis+Gyr (L+G) meters. PECO will replace the remaining previously installed 96,000 meters with L+G meters during the next 45 days. The company will then resume its meter installation work with L+G meters. As part of the project, Sensus is PECO's communications network provider.

"We have taken unprecedented steps to test our meters", said PECO President and CEO Craig Adams. "We are confident in the results of the scientific testing by independent experts. Based on our work, along with results of extensive independent testing, PECO has selected the Landis+Gyr (L+G) meter for use for our customers. And, UL (Underwriters Laboratories), a leading testing and certification company, has conducted safety performance tests using the UL safety requirements for utility meters and found that the L+G meter design we are using is fully compliant with these tests. We will continue to test and monitor our meters to ensure they meet the highest safety standards. Safety is always our top priority."

Customers will receive two letters and a telephone call beginning about six weeks prior to receiving a new meter. Customers with any questions or concerns can call 1-855-741-9011.

This project is part of PECO's continuing support of Pennsylvania's Act 129, requiring major utilities state-wide to install new metering technology for customers. The new meters will help PECO provide more information to customers to help them understand how they use energy, and how to save energy and money. The company also will be able to more quickly connect or disconnect service – providing faster, more convenient service for customers and assistance for emergency responders. And, PECO will be able to identify potentially dangerous situations like tampered meters and theft of electricity, detect problems faster – helping the company deploy field forces more effectively – and provide future new products and services to customers.

Sponsored link: Watch on-demand webinars from Structure. Topics include cyber security considerations when upgrading SCADA, optimizing business processes, GMS and more.

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SMART METERS ARE FIRE STARTERS

This is the technical analysis that the Peco resuming smart meter installations Philly article, did not tell you.
<http://bcfreedom.wordpress.com/2012/10/10/smoking-gun-did-utilities-and-meter-makers-admit-responsibility-for-fires/>
 The amazing thing to me is that the PECO talking Head , straight out told you that if Peco and Sensus do not come to terms as to who is responsible for the boondoggle. The PECO ratepayers will get left HOLDING the BAG! absorbing the costs of their screw-up!!
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 The BIG boys Play...The Little people PAY!
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 Mr. Thiesen below says it exactly how it is and I concur with his analysis 100%

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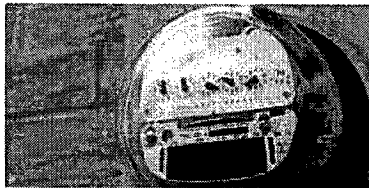


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Peco Energy announced Tuesday it will resume the smart meter installations it had stopped in August after several meters overheated and two caused fires at homes. Peco did not blame the Sensus meters it had installed for the fires, but said its own internal investigation and independent testing convinced utility officials to resume the installation project with meters from Swiss maker Landis+Gyr (L+G).

The Peco statement said in part: "Following its own internal investigation and additional scientific analysis and testing by independent experts, PECO will resume meter installation work with Landis+Gyr meters. PECO will replace the remaining previously installed 96,000 meters with L+G meters during the next 45 days. The company will then resume its meter installation work with L+G meters. As part of the project, Sensus is PECO's communications network provider."

A Sensus spokesman, quoted in the Philadelphia Inquirer, said the company was disappointed with the decision and added that the meters are safe. "All of the investigations we've seen have proven the Sensus meter is not a problem," said Randolph Wheatley, VP of corporate marketing for Sensus.

Sponsored link: Watch Accenture's video that features energy experts responding to children's questions about the importance of a smarter grid to a sustainable energy future.

A number of experts, including those at DNV KEMA, have said fire risks shouldn't be blamed on the meters, but on poor or degraded connections in the meter socket receptacles.

Peco had hired two independent firms and Underwriters Laboratories to examine and test the meters after it stopped the installations.

While Peco does not appear to have criticized the Sensus meters, "We determined that the L&G meter is the best solution for Peco customers, that it performed better in the field, and that was confirmed by testing," said Peco spokeswoman Cathy Engel Menendez, also quoted in the Inquirer.

Peco customers will receive mail and telephone notifications before receiving new meters.

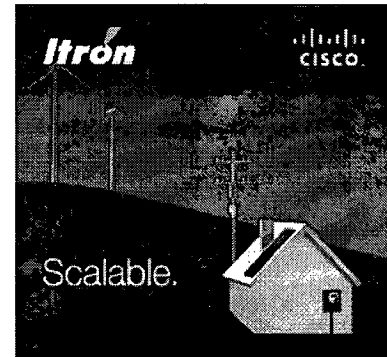
A Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission investigation into the meter installations is continuing.

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The issue is not just a problem for Sensus, but could give those groups opposed to smart meters more ammunition for their campaigns. And that would be unfortunate for the entire industry.

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5

The Enronization of Science

Lead...Hill and Knowlton. Vinyl chloride...Hill and Knowlton. Asbestos...Hill and Knowlton. Tobacco...Hill and Knowlton. Are we beginning to see a pattern here? Given where we are today, it is hard to believe that the cigarette manufacturers did not even have a trade association until 1953, when public relations guru John Hill warned the industry to get organized before it was too late and offered his firm's services for that dubious purpose. In 1966 Hill and Knowlton set up its Division of Scientific, Technical, and Environmental Affairs, which in later years would brag in solicitation brochures that this founding was "years before the first 'Earth Day' or the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency."¹ Regarding the vinyl chloride story, the firm boasted that it assisted the producers of this carcinogen "to help fight and finally bring under control one of the most violent media and government regulatory firestorms ever experienced by a single industry," with the result that the final OSHA standards "were significantly less onerous than had been originally proposed."² When three scientists linked chlorofluorocarbon gas—Freon—to the destruction of the ozone layer³ and users of the chemicals began to look for alternatives, Hill and Knowlton went into action. On behalf of the Freon manufacturers, the firm attacked the science as uncertain and later boasted that its work helped DuPont gain "two or three years before the government took action to ban fluorocarbons."⁴ In fact, the science was of the highest quality: The three researchers subsequently won a Nobel Prize.

While Hill and Knowlton continues to provide public relations services to polluters, since the 1970s the sophistication of the “product defense industry” has grown apace with the federal regulatory apparatus established by Congress. For thirty years, therefore, it has been pretty much smooth sailing—that is, lots of lucrative work—for the key players in the new industry who specialize in helping corporations fight regulation. Ironically, more work is assured them with every advance in our ability to identify the deleterious health effects of toxic exposures. Only in the last few decades have we perfected the techniques that allow us to recognize and measure the illness and premature death toll associated with specific components of air pollution. New laboratory techniques have enabled scientists to examine the endocrine-disrupting properties of chemicals at almost unthinkably low levels of concentration. As a general rule, the more we know, the more regulation is required. Industry and free-market ideologues despise this logic, but what is the alternative? *Ignore* the health impact of these toxins? Yes, or better yet, let’s debate the impact!

As the product defense work has gotten more and more specialized, the makeup of the business has changed; generic public relations operations like Hill and Knowlton have been eclipsed by product defense firms, specialty boutiques run by scientists. Having cut their teeth manufacturing uncertainty for Big Tobacco, scientists at ChemRisk, the Weinberg Group, Exponent, Inc., and other consulting firms now battle the regulatory agencies on behalf of the manufacturers of benzene, beryllium, chromium, MTBE (methyl tertiary-butyl ether), perchlorates, phthalates, and virtually every other toxic chemical in the news today. Their business model is straightforward. They profit by helping corporations minimize public health and environmental protection and fight claims of injury and illness. In field after field, year after year, this same handful of individuals and companies comes up again and again.

The range of their work is impressive. They have on their payrolls (or can bring in on a moment’s notice) toxicologists, epidemiologists, biostatisticians, risk assessors, and any other professionally trained, media-savvy experts deemed necessary. They and the larger, wealthier industries for which they work go through the motions we expect of the scientific enterprise, salting the literature with their questionable reports and studies. Nevertheless, it is all a charade. The work has one overriding motivation: advocacy for the sponsor’s position in civil court, the court of public opinion, and the regulatory arena. Often tailored to address issues that arise in litigation, they are more like legal pleadings than scientific papers. In the regulatory arena, the studies are useful not because they are good work that the regulatory agencies have to take seriously but because they clog the machinery and slow down the process.

Public health interests are beside the point. Follow the science wherever it leads? Not quite. This is science for hire, period, and it is extremely lucrative. Court records show that the big three U.S. auto companies paid product defense scientists \$23 million between 2001 and 2006 to help defend them against disease claims by mechanics and other workers exposed to asbestos contained in automobile brakes.⁵

The coterie of consulting firms that specialize in product defense have done a great job—so great that manufacturing uncertainty has become a big business in itself. The scientific studies these firms do for their clients are like the accounting work that some Arthur Andersen Company accountants did for Enron (until both companies went bankrupt): They appear to play by the rules of the discipline, but their objective is to help corporations frustrate regulators and prevail in product liability litigation.

* * *

Should the public lose all interest in its health, these product defense firms would be out of luck. Exponent, Inc., one of the premier firms in the product defense business, acknowledges as much in this filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission:

Public concern over health, safety and preservation of the environment has resulted in the enactment of a broad range of environmental and/or other laws and regulations by local, state and federal lawmakers and agencies. These laws and the implementing regulations affect nearly every industry, as well as the agencies of federal, state and local governments charged with their enforcement. To the extent changes in such laws, regulations and enforcement or other factors significantly reduce the exposures of manufacturers, owners, service providers and others to liability, the demand for our services may be significantly reduced.⁶

Exponent, Inc., began its existence as an engineering firm, calling itself Failure Analysis Associates and specializing in assisting the auto industry in defending itself in lawsuits involving crashes.⁷ “Failure analysis” is a standard methodology for investigating the breakdown of a system or machine, but the firm must have realized that “Failure” in its name might not work well outside the engineering world and switched to the more palatable Exponent, Inc., when it went public in 1998.⁸

Exponent’s scientists are prolific writers of scientific reports and papers. While some may exist, I have yet to see an Exponent study that does not support the conclusion needed by the corporation or trade association that is paying the bill. Here are brief sketches of a few recent Exponent projects:

- The taste and smell of the gasoline additive MTBE are so foul that a tiny amount makes water undrinkable. This is bad because MTBE has contaminated drinking water sources across the country. (Moreover, it causes cancer in animals and may do so in people also, but this will be difficult to determine because the exposure levels are very low, exactly the sort of situation that epidemiology has the most difficulty addressing. The state of California has categorized MTBE as a possible human carcinogen.⁹) Communities across the country have sued the major oil companies and the MTBE manufacturers for the costs of cleaning up their water supplies. In response, a firm that provides the methanol used for making MTBE hired Exponent to produce a series of studies that concluded, not surprisingly, that MTBE is unlikely to pose a public health hazard and has not significantly impacted California's drinking water.¹⁰ When the defendants in certain lawsuits tried to convince Congress to end the litigation by fiat and bail out the polluters, Exponent's economists produced a report for the American Petroleum Institute that concluded that the cost of the cleanup would be relatively low, which would make the proposed taxpayer bailout of the industry more acceptable to fiscal watchdogs.¹¹
- An article in the *Annals of Emergency Medicine* suggested that the new generation of amusement park rides exposed thrill seekers to g-forces (a measure of acceleration) that exceed those experienced by astronauts and recommended that emergency physicians consider these rides as "a possible cause of unexplained neurologic events in healthy patients."¹² Six Flags Theme Parks, Inc., immediately commissioned Exponent to produce an "Investigation of Amusement Park Roller Coaster Injury Likelihood and Severity."¹³ The press release on the report was headlined "Roller Coasters, Theme Parks Extraordinarily Safe."¹⁴
- Given the skyrocketing obesity rates among teenagers, many school systems and even some states have considered banning soda machines from high schools in order to discourage teenagers from consuming the empty calories. In 2005 an Exponent scientist conducted a study on behalf of the American Beverage Association that concluded that the number of beverages consumed from school vending machines "does not appear to be excessive."^{15,16} In this case, however, the public just could not be convinced. The soft drink industry jettisoned these findings and in 2006 agreed to stop selling soda in schools.¹⁷
- Defense giant Lockheed Martin turned to Exponent when faced with the huge potential cost of cleaning up underground water sources contaminated with perchlorate, a rocket fuel component that ac-

