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## **Smart Meter Opposition Grows**

Complaint Filed This Week at PUC

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Further opposition to smart meters grew early this week when 19 CMP ratepayers filed a formal complaint against Central Maine Power (CMP) and the Maine Public Utility Commission (PUC). While the 23 page complaint touches on many negative aspects of the meters, it focuses most on recent evidence regarding adverse health effects and electronic privacy issues.

In May, after ruling on earlier complaints, the PUC ordered customers be allowed to Opt Out and retain their old meter but also required ratepayers to pay CMP \$40 initially plus a \$12 monthly fee for this option. Many customers, including the current complainants, feel this is nothing more than extortion, citing The Hobbs Act which defines the term as *"the obtaining of property from another, with his consent, induced by wrongful use of actual or threatened force, violence, or fear, or under color of official right"* to support their claim.

"There is plenty not to like about smart meters-harmful effects on wildlife, adverse health effects, electronic trespass and privacy issues, interruption with other wireless devices and over-billing" said lead complainant Ed Friedman, whose Grandfather defended clients against illegal wiretaps in the 1950's and 1960's. "With customer safety at the core of the PUC mission, they can't, with any good conscience or legitimate legal standing, extort payment from ratepayers choosing to minimize exposure to meter problems."

Shortly after the PUC issued their first Order on Smart meters, the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (WHO/IARC) elevated non-ionizing radiation, the type emitted by smart meters, cell phones and other wireless devices to their **possible carcinogen** category (2B). This puts smart meter radiation at a higher risk level than such compounds as Aldicarb (active ingredient in the water-polluting pesticide Temik), Aldrin, Bisphenol A diglycidyl ether (BPA), coal dust, Dieldrin, Malathion, mercury, sulfur dioxide and toluene and in the same group as DDT, benzofuran, chlordane, chloroform, 4,4'-Diaminodiphenyl ether, diesel fuel, 2,6 Dinitrotoluene, gasoline, lead, Polybrominated biphenyls, styrene, Toluene diisocyanates, and 4-Vinylcyclohexene.

"The PUC has offered no substantial evidence or studies in the record concluding exposures to low levels of non-ionizing radiation are safe," stated owner and operator of Maine's popular Harraseeket Inn, Nancy Gray, "As an innkeeper I have an obligation to provide my guests with a safe and enjoyable stay in Maine including the assurance their visit here is free of adverse health effects and without electronic interference. The PUC would do well to remember tourism is Maine's biggest business."

Research into health effects of low level electromagnetic and radiofrequency (RF) radiation has been going on over seventy years. In 1971, the Navy Medical Research Institute published a bibliography of over 2,000 studies finding biological health effects from microwave and RF

radiation going back to the 1930s. More recent studies echo these findings but authorities in this country don't appear to be listening.

According to Kathleen McGee, another complainant and former Director of the Maine Toxics Action Coalition, the debate over meter health effects made no sense at all.

"The perspective of the PUC and the US Department of Energy, a force behind this project, is one of non-sense, not common sense", she said. "Their fundamental precept is reversed. Considering we all are at root, just a compilation of electrically charged particles, the question authorities should be asking is how could EMF or RF radiation from meters and other devices, **not** affect us at some level?"

Privacy concerns are high on the list for many. The National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) and Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers (AHAM) are among the more established entities to recognize potential privacy consequences of Smart Grid systems including: 1. Identity Theft, 2. Determination of Personal Behavior Patterns, 3. Determining Specific Appliances Used, 4. Performing Real-Time Surveillance, 5. Revealing Activities Through Residual Data, 6. Targeted Home Invasions, 7. Activity Censorship, 8. Decisions and Actions Based Upon Inaccurate Data, 9. Profiling, 10. Unwanted Publicity and Embarrassment, 11. Tracking Behavior of Tenants, 12. Behavior Tracking, and 13. Public Aggregated Searches Revealing Individual Behavior.

Dresden complainant Charlotte Iserbyt, a former Senior Policy Adviser with President Reagan's Department of Education, criticized surveillance aspects of the meters.

"This is illegal search and seizure plain and simple, nothing more than warrantless wiretapping", claimed Iserbyt, "Smart meters communicate with electronic devices in the home and transmit user information to the utility and or third party collectors. The net result is customer profiling and collection of detailed individual user data that can be sold or used by government."

The new Complainants seek the following from the PUC: 1) Stay the installation of further smart meters, or 2) Should further installations not be stayed, order future installations to be Opt In, and 3) Should Opt Out's continue, order past and future Opt Outs be at no cost to the ratepayer including switch-overs from ratepayers already with smart meters. 4) Should installations of smart meters continue, they request the Commission ensure the required Communication Plan present, in an unbiased fashion, concerns expressed by this and prior complaints that identify problems (including health, interference with other devices, privacy concerns and other issues included in, but not limited to, this complaint) ratepayers may have with so-called smart meters. Complainants contend the current CMP/PUC communication plan is incomplete and not transparent.) 5) That the Commission establish, within the Public Advocate's office, a toll free hot line number listed on CMP bills and in their communication plan where ratepayers may report smart meter complaints of all types. The group also requests the Commission establish a database where such complaints will be recorded.

"What to do while this shakes out?" says Friedman, "I encourage ratepayers to keep their existing (electro-mechanical) meters and just not pay the extra fee. "That sends a clear message."