



Rachel's Blog

Do "smart meters" know too much?



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Yesterday, the Maine Law Court heard oral arguments [in a case](#) pertaining to the health effects of Central Maine Power's "smart" electric meters. These meters also happen to be detailed information-gathering devices.

That's because each electric-powered device or appliance in your home has a unique electronic "fingerprint," and its activity is recorded by your meter. The data collected by smart meters is potentially of great interest to law enforcement as well as other third parties - washing machine manufacturers, for example, might like to know who owns an older, energy-inefficient washing machine that is likely to be replaced soon.

Unfortunately, there's not much oversight when it comes to what happens to this data, leading ACLU affiliates across the country – including in [Vermont](#), [Ohio](#) and [Hawaii](#) – to raise the alarm over smart meter privacy concerns. Here in Maine, we have the following suggestions for protecting the privacy of our data when it comes to smart meters:

- Law enforcement should not access Maine customers' smart meter data without a warrant. Any subpoenas or other court orders for a customer's smart meter data should be presented to the customer him/herself, not to the utility. The customer should have the opportunity to contest the subpoena.
- Utility customers should decide for themselves whether they wish to have a smart meter installed at their home. A utility should not charge extra fees if a customer decides to opt out of having a smart meter installed at his/her home.
- A customer's consent should be required anytime his/her data is being shared, sold, or given to a third-party not performing a primary purpose on behalf of the utility.

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