

Energy UK's Privacy Commitments for Smart Metering:

Why has Energy UK developed a set of privacy commitments?

- These commitments have been developed to provide energy consumers with information about what information is collected from smart meters and what that the information will be used for
- It also sets out rights and choices that apply to everyone in relation to smart metering information¹
- Smart meters will usually record meter readings every half hour and store them for 13 months. This provides much more detail about your energy consumption than before

Why is information from smart meters important?

- Your energy supplier will collect information about the supply of energy to your home and about your energy usage
- They will also collect information that confirms your meter is working properly
- As your smart meter records and stores meter readings every half-hour, your energy supplier might need, or want to collect and use this information
- They will tell you what they will use the information for and the choices you have over whether or not you want them to collect and use this information

What will information from your smart meters be used for?

Uses of information will include:

- To bill you for energy used, help manage the supply of energy to your home, to help energy companies become more efficient in how they operate, and to improve customer service
- To manage the products and services your supplier provides to you, as well as developing new ones
- To enable your energy supplier to help you reduce the amount of energy you use, including providing you with energy efficiency advice
- To help prevent and detect energy theft and manage the operation of your smart meters
- To help manage debt and credit risk associated with energy bills
- To help develop and manage energy supply and demand

This list is not exhaustive, and if information is needed for any other purpose, your energy supplier will tell you, along with the choices you have over what this information is used for

When and how will information be collected from your smart meter?

- You will be offered an In-Home Display device with your smart meters. This will allow you to see how much energy you are using in near real-time². This real-time information displayed on your In-Home Display device will not be visible to your energy supplier
- Your energy supplier will only collect the information it needs, and has told you about
- Your energy supplier will tell you how frequently they will collect information from your smart meters

¹ *The Data Protection Act 1998 sets out rights and obligations about the use of personal data – for more information go to the website of the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.gov.uk*

² *The information relating your electricity consumption on your In-Home Display device will normally refresh every 5-10 seconds, but due to battery life constraints your gas consumption will refresh much less often*

- Consumption information will not be collected in real-time (your energy supplier won't be able to see the exact time you have used energy, just a total amount used between any two separate meter readings) unless it is needed for a particular product or service you have agreed to take
- Your energy supplier might need to obtain up to date information from your smart meter to help resolve a query you have about your energy account – they will tell you if they need to do this
- Your energy supplier will not collect consumption information about the use of individual appliances in your home, unless it is needed for a particular product or service you have agreed to take
- Information will be sent securely to your energy supplier, without the need for anyone to visit your home to read your meter
- Your energy supplier may still need to visit from time to time to carry out a safety inspection, or to read, repair or replace the meter if a problem occurs

Who else may be given access to the information collected from your smart meter?

- Organisations and agents that your supplier contracts with to help them run their business, or help provide products and services to you
- Other industry parties, such as network companies, who help manage energy supply, distribution or central industry systems.
- In some certain circumstances the police or other organisations, including industry bodies involved in preventing and detecting theft or fraud, in accordance with data protection law
- Your energy supplier will not sell information from your smart meters to any third parties, unless you agree
- Wherever possible, your energy supplier will tell you if they may need to disclose information about you to any other party

How will I be kept informed about the use of information from smart meters?

- Your energy supplier will tell you what your information will be used for before your smart meters are installed, and also include details in any information that is given to you when your smart meter is being installed
- If the way your information is to be used changes, or if it is to be used for different purposes, your supplier will tell you (in advance wherever possible), and where relevant, highlight any choices you have over whether to accept these changes

What choices do I have and when can I make them?

- Your supplier will tell you about the choices you have in relation to the collection and use of information from your smart meter. As a minimum this will include the chance to ask them not to collect and use half hourly meter readings if these are not needed to meet contractual or legal obligations
- You can make choices about how your supplier collects and uses your information at any time, before or after your smart meters are installed, including when you are notified of any changes to how your information is collected or used
- Your energy supplier will give you details of who to contact about the choices you might want to make regarding the collection and use of information from your smart meters

What will energy companies do to protect your information?

- Information from your smart meters will be protected using encryption, controlled access and other appropriate security measures, including those agreed with Government
- Access to information from your smart meters will be limited to authorised members of staff who have received relevant standards of training
- Information collected from your smart meters will only be kept for as long as is necessary and will be deleted when it is no longer needed
- If you decide to switch energy supplier, your old supplier will still be able to access historical data for the period they supplied you – they won't be able to access any new information generated from your smart meters from the date your new supplier takes over
- Any 3rd parties who may hold your information on behalf of your energy supplier will apply the same standards to safeguard your information and your supplier will remain responsible for their use of your information

Your rights

- Your energy supplier will not use information from smart meters to market products or services to you, if you have asked them not to
- Your energy supplier will not give third parties your information for their own marketing purposes without your agreement
- You can ask your energy supplier not to send you marketing messages to your In-Home Display if it is capable of receiving them
- Your energy supplier will tell you how you can access the energy consumption information stored on your smart meters. Access to this information will be free of charge. If you are accessing data directly from your smart meter, you may need to purchase additional equipment to help display this information. Your energy supplier will tell you if you need to purchase any additional equipment
- You can request a copy of any personal information that your energy supplier holds about you – they will tell you who to contact to obtain this information and if there is a charge for providing this
- If your energy supplier holds any information about you that you believe is incorrect – they will tell you who to contact to put it right

If you have a complaint

- Your energy supplier will provide you with details of who to contact if you have a complaint
- Your energy supplier will follow approved complaint handling procedures to help resolve any query you may have as quickly as possible, this includes complaints to the Energy Ombudsman
- If you feel that your energy supplier has not given you a satisfactory response to a complaint about the way information from your smart meter has been used, you can raise the complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (the ICO)³.

³The Information Commissioner's Office is the UK's independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals. Website: www.ico.gov.uk; Helpline: 0303 123 1113; Address: First Contact team, Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, SK9 5AF.