

Smart Gas Meters

Traditionally, residential gas customers have had standard analogue (non-smart) meters which required a meter reader to come to their house to physically read the meter and record how much gas they had used since it was last read.

Today, like the smart meters introduced for monitoring electricity consumption in recent years, smart meters for measuring piped natural gas use are replacing the older analogue gas meters.

What is a smart gas meter?

The main difference between smart meters and the older, analogue meters is that smart meters can be read remotely by the gas retailer or metering company, and the meter is able to record usage at more frequent intervals.

Analogue meters cannot be read remotely, so someone from the gas provider has to physically visit the meter to read it.

What are the benefits for customers?

One of the main benefits for customers is that you can get accurate monthly bills based on your actual consumption.

Previously, when an older analogue meter had to be read physically on site by a meter inspector, actual readings were often supplemented by estimated 'readings' on alternate months, reducing the demand on the meter reading workforce and lessening the associated cost of physical readings.

Being able to be read remotely, smart meters also lessen any security concerns regarding access to your property to read the meter.

Do I have a choice?

Retailers are required to ensure that there is an accurate meter at your home. Your retailer may therefore need to replace or recertify the meters at your property to ensure they are still fit for purpose. Rather than recertifying older meters, some are upgrading to smart meters.

Your contract with your retailer probably says that they can replace your meter as they see fit. If you do not want your older meter replaced by a smart meter, contact your retailer to discuss your options.

Is my data private?

Information about household gas usage is considered personal information under the [Privacy Act](#) if it can be linked to the person who has the account.

Your retailer must comply with the Privacy Act 2020 when storing and using data from a smart meter.

Your provider should:

- say why it is collecting the data
- say how it will use the data
- keep the data secure
- only use the data for the purposes the provider said it will use the data for.

You can read what the [Privacy Commissioner](#) says about it on their website.

Are there any health and safety concerns?

Some people have concerns about the radiofrequency energy (RF) or electromagnetic frequency (EMF) a smart meter emits when collecting or sending data.

There is no established evidence that smart meters pose a health risk. Smart meters operate using the same technology as your cell phone. Smart gas meters:

- transmit very infrequently, for only a minute or less each day in total
- use very low power, similar to a WiFi router
- are mostly located outside, making the radio signal levels very low indoors.

Smart meters must comply with maximum exposure limits set out in New Zealand Standard 2772.1:1999 for exposures to radiofrequency fields.

The maximum exposure from radio frequency radiation from a smart meter has been measured at one five hundredth of the allowed limit for New Zealand.

These standards are set by the Ministry of Health. The Ministry also has information on smart meters on their website. See: [Ministry of Health on smart meters](#)

Smart meter radio frequency radiation is much lower than the limit set in the New Zealand Standard, which is more than 50 times lower than the recognised threshold for effects.

Links to further information about smart meters:

[The Privacy Commissioner](#)

[The Ministry of Health](#)

[Consumer NZ](#)

[Citizens Advice Bureau](#)

[Utilities Disputes](#)