

WHO KNEW? The Wireless Smart Meter Meltdown

The misguided program of mandatory 'smart wireless meters' has done more to undercut the gains in public support for energy conservation in this country than any other single factor. The national shift to embrace energy conservation in the face of climate change has been derailed by mandatory 'wireless smart meter' programs. And judging by the public outrage against the National Security Agency (NSA) spying program revealed by Edward Snowden last summer, Americans have come to understand that government mandates for smart meters is likely one more 'deep drilling project' on their personal habits, preferences, life styles and medical conditions. The smart meter program is widely seen as a spying, snooping, expensive, potentially hazardous, involuntary and entirely unnecessary burden for which energy conservation is a mirage. It is unlikely that Americans will stand for public utilities spying on their homes using energy use and conservation as the ruse, and make money on these data by selling their personal information to third party information brokers for profit.

How could one bad idea so completely galvanize such enormous and widespread public resistance? And lead to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) review of radiofrequency radiation (RFR) wireless safety standards and general distrust for government ideas about energy conservation? And undercut public support for some national environmental groups? It is really quite stunning how a single failed corporate/governmental strategy could backfire so rapidly and so completely.

Some national environmental groups bought into the technology, mistakenly gave it a 'green' endorsement, and actively partnered with 'smart' technology corporations like the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF). Some have publicly promoted the 'smart meter' as a good way to achieve energy conservation. Other environmental groups have been silent. They have turned a blind eye and refuse to take a position.

Environmental group leadership and independence of scientific assessment has taken a huge blow and will take decades to recover. Donors will think twice about where they send their donations to protect the environment. They believed in false promises but didn't look deep enough. The national priority to convince families to conserve energy for the good of the planet has taken a direct blow. Who can believe in them now?

It shows how little anyone really knew what these meters entailed in 'unintended consequences'. And how immediate the adverse effects would become visible.

And now coupled with the unprecedented window on the NSA phone-snooping program Edward Snowden has revealed, American soil is already fertile ground plowed for government surveillance. The NSA tracks and stores information the phone calls of every man, woman and child in this country. Federal judge Richard Leon termed the NSA program mass collection of phone data "*a likely violation of the fourth amendment, relating to unreasonable searches and seizures*". He characterized the NSA program as "*almost Orwellian*" in it's scope and wrote "*(I) cannot imagine a more*

'indiscriminate' and 'arbitrary invasion' than this systematic and high-tech collection and retention of personal data on virtually every citizen for purposes of querying and analyzing it without prior judicial approval," . The same words can be applied to the unprecedented volume and detail of data collection in the hands of utilities mandating 'smart meters', where the data is even less secure and more deeply revealing of personal life styles, preferences, habits and comings-and-goings.

WHO KNEW?

Who knew how rapidly community groups across the US would spring up, resist in the streets and hearing halls, communicate, investigate, publish results, organize and advocate against smart meters, and form an entirely new network of activists, advocates, medical doctors, scientific and public health experts and privacy groups across the country?

Who knew a federal judge would strike down the government's premier NSA spying program as an unconstitutional breach of the Fourth Amendment, and an indiscriminate and arbitrary invasion of privacy – a program which collects LESS information on Americans than so-called 'smart meters' can do?

Who knew the list of grievances against smart meters would be so diverse and profoundly motivating that it would align Tea Party groups with the most liberal political groups in the country against this intrusive technology?

Who knew that utility ratepayers would pay triple for the hardware that has been shown NOT to result in energy savings? First, the original meter, then the wireless smart meter, then the expensive opt-out?

Who knew that smart meters would fail to deliver energy savings? Utility studies show less than 10% of HAN-enabled households pay any attention whatsoever to the conservation via smart meter technology.

Who knew that you could save more energy unplugging a few appliances? Who knew the energy conservation you've already incorporated into daily living would be dismissed and ignored? What is the incentive now to conserve more with this unwanted burden of costly and unnecessary technology that has so backfired?

Who knew that the FCC's own manual with formulas for calculating RFR emissions would show violations of public safety limits are possible in the manner smart meters are installed and operated (by calculating RFR emissions using the 100% duty cycle rule that is mandated 'where the public cannot be excluded' in FCC OET 65).

Who knew the FCC Grants of Authorization that certify compliance of smart meters with compulsory RFR testing in FCC approved labs would issue 'conditions' that cannot be met in the manner meters are commonly installed and operated (Grants specify conditions that prohibit the meter from operating in conjunction with any other antenna, yet every

meter contains two antennas within inches of each other; that conditions specify a mandatory 20 cm (8") separation between the meter and any person (not met and entirely unenforceable).

Who knew that local public utility commissions would side with utilities - to allow them to make an additional profit on ratepayers who opt-out; to allow a surcharge on electricity bills in order NOT to risk family health, information privacy, security from hacking and home robbery, electrical fire and use of critical care medical equipment in ones' own home?

Who knew that utilities could ration electricity by tiering of costs; so that it will cost everyone more unless you can do your housework at 1 am?

Who knew that smart meters are programmed so that they can remotely turn off your electricity from the utility downtown when demand is high?

Who knew that the basic vulnerability of wireless electric meters could so easily be hacked, risk privacy of personal information, be tracked by companies for consumer preferences and sold to third-party data marketers?

Who knew that the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense would criticize the smart grid, wireless in particular, as a fundamental cyber-threat to the electric grid?

Who knew that personal home security could be so easily threatened by thieves and home invasion robbers by tracking energy use with simple WI-FI devices from the street?

Who knew that the WHO IARC would classify smart meter RFR emissions as a Possible Human Carcinogen just a year into the first state rollout by California? What did the federal government miss? What did these corporations who took the federal stimulus money miss? Who didn't see this coming? Who didn't want to look? What will be the consequence of this monumental error in judgment?

Who knew that the FCC would be forced by the federal Governmental Accountability Office (GAO), by inquisitive legislators, by scientific evidence pointing to serious health consequences from RFR emissions below FCC public safety limits, and by sheer force of public opinion in this country to re-evaluate the adequacy of it's safety standards just three years later?

Who knew how much national good will could be lost by forcing people to accept a fatally flawed technological program that intrudes into the very sanctity of the family home, and risks their health, privacy, security, and well-being and that of their children?

Who knew that the levels of RFR are sufficiently high to cause damage to the growing fetus, the young child and children doing their homework or sleeping in their own beds?

Who knew that RFR levels within the family home could exceed RFR levels reported to cause unendurable side effects on health and well-being, and force families to abandon their homes?

Who knew that medical implants in the body could be disrupted and disabled (pacemakers, defibrillators, wireless pain pumps, wireless insulin pumps)?

Who knew that it would spur the Department of Justice that administers the Americans with Disabilities Act, would launch hearings around the country taking testimony on RFR interference with critical medical care and medical implant technologies used by many millions of Americans for vital health care needs?

The government has shot itself in the heart. What was a growing national commitment to energy conservation based on hard-won climate change science and public policy and educational outreach has been decimated by a single atrocious program. It has outraged and demoralized the public.

It has put young mothers and grandmothers under arrest for protecting their children and grandchildren. It has created fear and loathing for 'big brother governing'.

The government has facilitated corporate rewards for inflicting unreasonable health and financial burden on the American family. The program has invoked rebuke and rejection by other federal agencies who find direct conflicts in agency responsibilities with the smart meter technology rollout, as it is being installed and operated around the country.

It has forced corporate resignations at the highest levels of utility management.

The credibility of gullible environmental groups has been tarnished.

People will think twice now about believing any more 'schemes' for green energy conservation after this fiasco. When even respected environmental groups don't do their homework first, and blindly support and partner with government and corporations on these programs (EDF as the leading example), the public will balk at the 'next good idea', and this skepticism will be well-founded.

Beyond just the immediate push-back by the public, there will be a long standing consequence of community organizing across the US - that has now linked many thousands of people together from hometown streets to the State Legislatures. The apparatus is in place to question, to protest and to resist bad technology wherever it appears and is mandated by corporate/governmental interests placed above the public interest and public health.

Turning the public's embrace for the need to 'do ones part' for the planet - for the need to personalize energy conservation measures at the cost of the individual for the good of societies around the world - has been disrupted and consumers have become disillusioned with false promises funded by federal stimulus dollars.

The NSA debacle and the wireless energy metering programs have so hardened public opinion against governmental and corporate misuse of public funds that have anti-family, anti-privacy and anti-health consequences for every American family, there may be no salvaging ANY conservation opportunities. Smart metering is based on deceptive promises by utilities and their complicit public utility commissions, and the facts have only been exposed by public investigation and the resulting outrage expressed across the country.

What will happen if there is no change?

Will people turn away from what was a voluntary commitment to personal energy conservation? The 'green' part of smart meter mythology has been discredited, and some states are turning away from the propaganda from meter manufacturers that wireless meters are safe and energy-saving devices. We know now, after some experience that there is no energy savings, other than the phantom promises on corporate brochures.

Will public rejection and legal challenge of these two kinds of governmental snooping and surveillance programs be sufficient to re-think the entire 'smart technology' idea?