



PRESS RELEASE

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Safety Concerns Fall on Deaf Ears after Numerous BC Smart Meter Fires

Hundreds of smart meter fires have been reported around North America and more than a dozen of them have occurred here in British Columbia, the most recent damaging a Vernon restaurant. (<http://goo.gl/XN1br>)

In Ontario, after an "unusual amount of fire incidents involving smart meters", the Ontario Fire Marshall found many reports of overheating meters, and various design flaws that could lead to fires. (<http://goo.gl/VUgTH>) Surprisingly, in some cases the meter had been removed and another installed by the utility company, or the evidence removed before a thorough investigation could be done. (<http://goo.gl/oq7pQ>)

In British Columbia we have no information at all about smart meter fires. Hydro denies they have occurred and no one is keeping track of smart meter-related incidents. "We were appalled to find that no one within government, not even the BC Fire Commissioner, has been keeping any record of the rash of smart meter fires here in BC," said Sharon Noble, Director, Coalition to Stop Smart Meters. "Shelley Ballantyne, the Commission's Fire Reporting System Officer, said that they are recording smart meter fires as 'electrical' because there is "no code for smart meters."

BC Hydro has refused to take any responsibility for the many fires reported and the many other fires which have not received media attention. Instead Hydro blames the home owners' meter bases or home wiring. To many victims of fires and damaged appliances it seems Hydro prefers only the most cursory investigation, leaving electrical consumers concerned for their family's welfare, and putting a further cloud of doubt over the public utility's integrity.

This lack of documentation allows Hydro to say that the meters are safe and have caused no fires. It also allows our Provincial Fire Chief Len Garis to assure, in a report commissioned and paid for by Hydro, that there have been no recorded fires. Having no data gives the public false assurance about the safety and quality of the smart meters being put on their homes.

ITRON's smart meter is plastic, not glass and metal as the analog is, and is not certified safe by either CSA or UL. According to Noble, "There is a loophole in the BC Safety Standards which says that equipment used by BC Hydro doesn't need to be certified safe. But these things are being put on our homes, not on poles along the road."

Electrical engineers, such as George Karadimas in Maryland, and other experts have identified design flaws. According to Sage Associates/James J. Briegel, EMF consultant, the typical electrical wiring in our homes is not intended to carry the high frequency spikes emitted by the smart meter. Years ago they predicted that fires and damaged appliances would result. (<http://goo.gl/5iqWK>)

The Coalition is asking why BC Hydro is allowed to play Russian roulette with our safety.

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