

BC Hydro cuts off power to Hills family on meter choices program  
by Jan McMurray

A Hills family has had their hydro disconnected after refusing to pay BC Hydro's "legacy fee" for keeping their old meter.

This is the first known disconnection of its kind in the province. Citizens for Safe Technology, the organization at the forefront of the campaign against smart meters, knows of no other disconnection because of the refusal to pay the opt-out fees.

Kip Drobish reported that a BC Hydro lineman came to the house on September 4 to disconnect the power. Drobish says he asked the lineman if there was any other disconnection on his work order, and the lineman said no.

The Drobish family has paid for their electricity usage, but has not paid the monthly \$32.40 fee, nor the taxes on the fee. BC Hydro started adding the legacy fee to bills as of December 1, so the family owes BC Hydro approximately \$250.

Drobish says he did not pay the legacy fee because he feels it is "punitive and unreasonable. They are reading some people's smart meters because the smart meters are not working everywhere yet, but they aren't charging those people the fee. They're reading meters, and charging some people and not others."

Drobish, who is a solar dealer, was on BC Hydro's net metering program, feeding the excess power generated by his solar system into the grid. As a result, he said the family's hydro bills, before the legacy fee, were very low. "It will be a negative number or zero this month because of how much solar we've had," he said.

Drobish says the family now plans to go completely off grid. "It's liberating for me to not to have to pay the fee and not have to deal with smart meter program," he said.

The family already has a solar hot water system, a wood stove, and a gravity water system. "We'll get a propane range and we'll set ourselves up with bigger batteries [for the solar system] and a generator – we'll need that for the winter," he said.

Drobish says the cost to be off grid will not be significantly more for him, because as a solar distributor he can get the equipment at a good price. But he says being off grid is not a practical option for most people. “Most homeowners will find it less expensive and less of a hassle to be on the grid.”

Drobish says the family received two written requests for payment of the amount in arrears, and two automated phone calls notifying them that their power would be cut off if payment was not received. He says there was no BC Hydro phone number on the written or telephone notices – the only methods of communication provided were to visit [bchydro.com/payments](http://bchydro.com/payments) or to create an online account to make a payment.