

From: [Customer, Relations](#)
To: [Complaints BCUC:EX](#); [Customer, Relations](#)
Subject: RE: Vancouver Island customer complaints - re disconnection without notice
Date: Monday, November 7, 2016 11:03:25 AM
Attachments: [Final Notice of Disconnect Time Expired.docx](#)

Dear Mr. Ho,

BC Hydro acknowledges receipt of your email dated October 28, 2016 in regards to customers residing on Vancouver Island concerned about the lack of notice prior to being disconnected during the meter exchange process.

BC Hydro is required by law to replace expired meters. As a result, we are in the process of removing expired meters across the Province which is a standard operational activity. Failure to meet the deadline is considered non-compliant with Federal Measurement Canada regulations. There can be significant penalties from Measurement Canada for leaving a meter in service beyond the seal expiration date.

While it's always a last resort, if we are unable to exchange the expired legacy meter we will have no choice but to disconnect service. BC Hydro does not disconnect electric service without notice except in the case of a safety issue.

Pursuant to section 6.7 of the Electric Tariff, a Minimum Reconnection Charge will apply when Service is reconnected to a premise previously disconnected where all Metering Equipment and other BC Hydro equipment used to provide Service remains in place. In certain circumstances described in section 6.7 of the Electric Tariff, no Minimum Reconnection Charge will apply.

In regard to the \$700 standard charge for manual reconnections at the point of delivery, if the Customer fails to provide access to the meter it may be necessary for BC Hydro to disconnect service from the secondary line at the pole (i.e., as opposed to disconnecting service at the customer's meter). On November 3, 2015, the British Columbia Utilities Commission issued Order G-175-15, which established the \$700 refused access reconnection charge on an interim basis, pending a final decision as part of BC Hydro's 2015 Rate Design Application.

A manual disconnection at the service connection is performed only when BC Hydro has made repeated attempts to contact customers to obtain access to the meter. These customer contacts could include multiple letters, as well as phone calls by agents or by an auto-dialer. The contacts include notifying the customer of the potential \$700 reconnection charge. Furthermore, the charge is not applied unless an attempt of a meter exchange has been refused on-site.

BC Hydro has offered many of the customers on Vancouver Island the option of a digital legacy meter replacement in exchange of their time expired meters. These meters were made available after a final inventory search found 264 legacy meters had become available through the normal course of meter exchanges. In some instances, customers have refused the legacy to legacy meter exchange.

BC Hydro's staff and contractors are required to knock at the door before installation. If there is no response, field crews will complete the work if they are able to obtain access to the meter. Metering Contractors were selected through an extensive procurement process that ensured adherence to BC Hydro procurement thresholds and regulations. Under the scope of work, vendors were required to only use:

- Electrically qualified "Red Seal" workers.

- Workers that have been approved by BC Hydro to work on the BC hydro system
- Workers who have completed Power System Safety Protection training
- Workers are required to have criminal background checks
- Worker must wear Fire Resistant clothing as per BC Hydro Policy
- Workers must wear a BC Hydro identification badge when communicating with Customers

We have responded to your specific information request for the period October 15, 2016 to October 22, 2016 in order as follows:

1. The number of meters that were exchanged on Vancouver Island and particularly in Cowichan Valley and Cobble Hill?

There were 42 meters exchanged on Vancouver Island with one in Cowichan Bay and zero in Cobble Hill.

2. If meters were exchanged, what were the reason(s) for the exchanges?

The main purpose for these exchanges was for timed expired and non-functioning meters.

3. Whether the above customers were provided with any notice prior to a meter exchange and disconnection?

Customers were notified prior to a meter exchange and disconnection. Customers with time expired meters were informed that they would receive a digital meter for exchange and could be subject to disconnection if they refused access to the meter. Attached is a sample of the Final Notice of Disconnect that was mailed to Customers.

4. If notice was provided please confirm the method notice was provided. If no notice was provided, please confirm why notice was not provided?

Notification was provided to customers through a combination of letters and phone calls. BC Hydro attempts at least 3 letters and 3 phone calls for each account. In some cases, we have attempted to work with customers with time expired meters for several months.

5. Whether any complaints were made to BC Hydro regarding disconnections without notice for meter exchanges in this region?

As discussed on November 3, 2016 BC Hydro has not received any escalated complaints regarding disconnections without notice for meter exchanges in this region.

I trust this information provides a better understanding of BC Hydro's meter exchange requirements, processes and practices in regards to this matter. Please contact me if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Mary Hayles

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From: Complaints BCUC:EX [mailto:Complaints@bcuc.com]
Sent: 2016, October 28 3:16 PM
To: Customer, Relations
Subject: Vancouver Island customer complaints - re disconnection without notice

Good Afternoon,

The BC Utilities Commission is in receipt of a number of correspondence from BC Hydro customers residing in Vancouver Island concerning the lack of notice prior to being disconnected during the meter exchange process. The correspondence states the following:

- customers on Vancouver Island, including those in the areas of Cowichan Valley and Cobble Hill, who had their meters exchanged were disconnected without notice;
- BC Hydro's staff and/or contractors failed to properly identify themselves to BC Hydro customers prior to commencing work;
- BC Hydro's staff and/or contractors who performed the meter exchange lacked the civility expected of a BC Hydro representative while interacting with its customers, including specific reference to subcontractor Brian Stevens from A.T. Maintenance Plus; and
- these incidents began on or about October 15, 2016.

Commission staff request BC Hydro to please review the above incidents and respond to the Commission. Specifically, please provide the following information for the period between October 15, 2016 to October 22, 2016:

1. The number of meters that were exchanged on Vancouver Island and particularly in Cowichan Valley and Cobble Hill;
2. If meters were exchanged, what were the reason(s) for the exchanges;
3. Whether the above customers were provided with any notice prior to a meter exchange and disconnection;
4. If notice was provided please confirm the method notice was provided. If no notice was provided, please confirm why notice was not provided; and
5. Whether any complaints were made to BC Hydro regarding disconnections without notice for meter exchanges in this region.

Thank you,

Canon

Canon Ho, B.Com., J.D.

Customer Relations Analyst

British Columbia Utilities Commission

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Date

NAME

ADDRESS

ADDRESS

Dear Customer,

FOR SERVICE AT:

ACCOUNT NUMBER:

We must complete a meter exchange at this address. To avoid service disconnection please contact us at 1 800 409 8199 before [date].

Why we're exchanging the meter

To make sure we're billing you correctly, we have to measure your electricity use accurately and ensure we meet the federal accuracy standards set by Measurement Canada.

Every BC Hydro meter has a seal on the back that identifies when the meter must be removed from service according to Measurement Canada standards. The Measurement Canada certification on the meter at your property has expired and must be removed from service.

Your choices

You are currently using a legacy meter. Since, BC Hydro no longer has stock of legacy meters you have the options to switch to standard smart meter for free or you'll default to receive a radio-off meter. The radio transmitter in a radio-off meter has been disabled. It does not send any radio signals and will have to be read in person. You can confirm that you have a radio-off meter by watching the display: radio-off meters cycle through to a screen that shows "RF OPT OUT."

Once a radio-off meter is installed, the monthly legacy meter fee (\$32.40) you've been paying will end, and the radio-off meter fees will start. These fees include:

- a one-time set-up fee of \$22.60, which helps to recover the cost of converting the meter and installing it at your property;
- a monthly operating fee of \$20, which helps to recover the ongoing costs of serving a non-communicating meter and ensuring the smart grid can work as planned around this meter; and
- a one-time exit fee of \$55 if you move or change to a smart meter.

Providing unrestricted access to our equipment is a service requirement. To prevent disconnection without further notice, please arrange access and confirm at the number above.

If disconnection occurs, then prior to reconnection:

- you will have to establish permanent access arrangements,
- the necessary maintenance must be completed, and
- a reconnection charge of up to \$700 may apply.

For fire and safety reasons, if your power is disconnected, it is important that all electrical equipment is turned off or disconnected, particularly equipment that produces heat such as stoves, space heaters, and irons. You may also need to take steps to protect your premises against potential weather damage.

Thanks,

Daren Sanders
Senior Manager, Customer Service Operations