

Before the Senate Utilities Committee

Testimony in Opposition to SB209

Provided by Bruce Mueller, CEO, Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc.

March 15, 2017

Chairman Olson and members of the Senate Utilities Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding SB209. Wheatland Electric Cooperative Inc. (WEC) is a distribution cooperative headquartered in Scott City, Kansas. We provide service to almost 34,000 meters owned by 21,000 members in central and western Kansas. We have 136 full time employees that provide service through 4,600 miles of distribution lines. WEC serves members in 14 Kansas and 2 Colorado counties.

Since Wheatland Electric was formed in 1948, we've continued to provide our members the best possible service at a competitive price. We have a history of innovation and look for ways we can serve the needs of our community to improve their quality of life. When community leaders asked for help recruiting large dairies from California, Wheatland helped. When our communities needed broadband service, Wheatland created a broadband company to deliver service to our members. When our local food pantry had more requests than supplies, Wheatland created the Cram the Van program that collects canned goods for people in our entire service territory. When there was need for a quality water supply for southwest Kansas, Wheatland responded and created a water company, and when technology was available to provide better information to our members, Wheatland responded.

For the last 18 months, Wheatland staff have installed over 33,500 Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) throughout our system. Because of the AMI and Meter Data Management (MDM) deployments, operational cost savings have been realized through automation of meter reading and member service activities. The AMI system provides immediate notification of meter failures. We may know the lights are off before our member does.

The AMI system provides our member access to their usage data through SmartHub. Accessing this data puts a wealth of information at the member's fingertips, allowing them to make informed decisions about their energy usage and compares usage to previous days, months and years. Our member service team is available to assist our members with understanding their electricity usage and how to reduce their monthly bill. Members can also access SmartHub by downloading the free mobile application. Access to more data and timely use information ultimately gives our members the information they need to make better decisions on how they use electricity.

Our staff interacts daily with our members. We will always develop programs that benefit our members. Having access to usage information through SmartHub and our AMI system gives our members the information they need to control their electric bill. This technology is already

providing transparency to our members. I believe having access to this information is much more powerful than adding 15 line items to our electric bill.

Please vote no on SB209. Our members already receive the information they need to understand and control their electric bill.

I will be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce W. Mueller

General Manager

Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Garden City, Kansas

What is AMI?

How You, the Member, Can Benefit

After investing in nearly 33,500 AMI meters, Wheatland members have more control than ever over their energy use and electric bills.

In September 2015, Wheatland Electric began telling you, our members, about installing new Automated Metering Infrastructure (AMI) across our service territory. Fast forward 18 months and the process is all but complete. Our crews and operations staff have been busy installing nearly 33,500 meters. Your meter may look similar to the old one, but is much more sophisticated and offers many more advantages.

Reduced Meter Reading Costs

As a result of the AMI and Meter Data Management deployments, operational cost savings have been realized through automation of meter reading and member service activities.

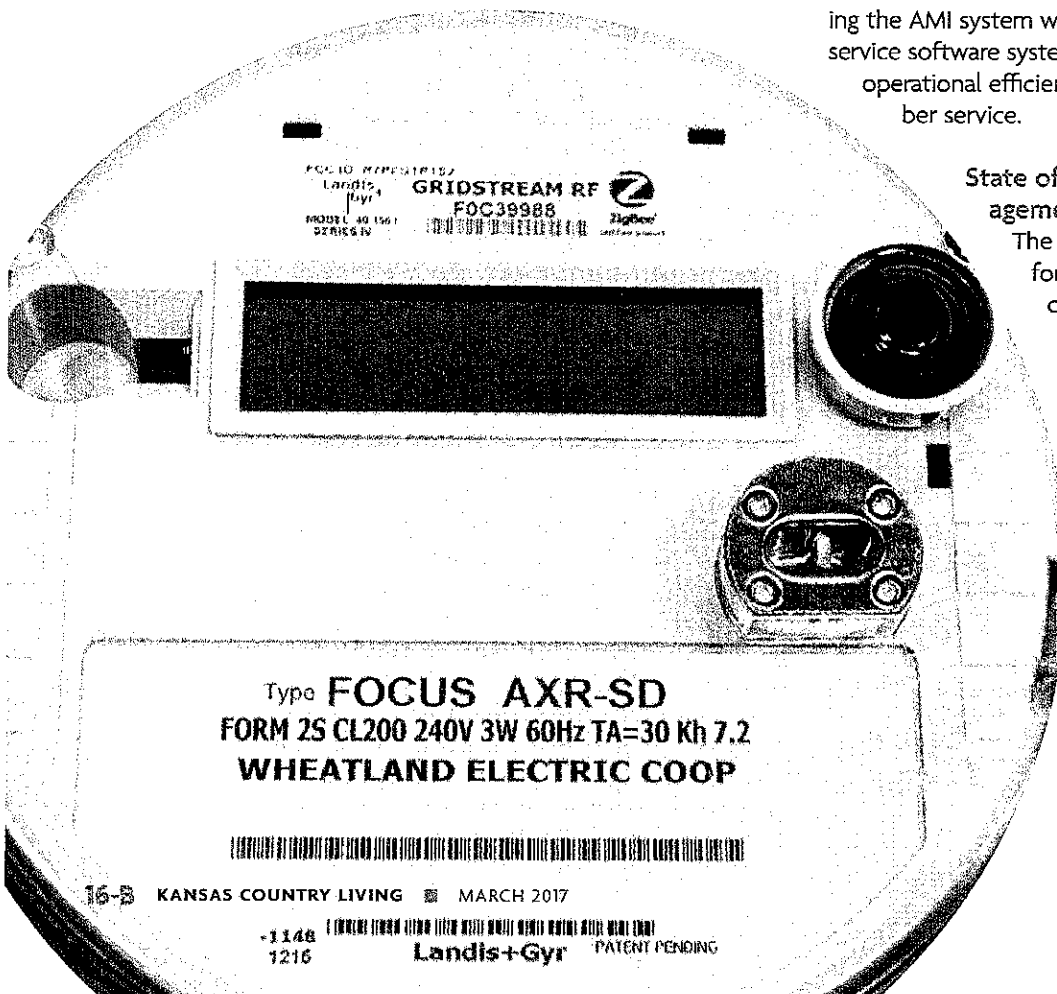
Improved Service

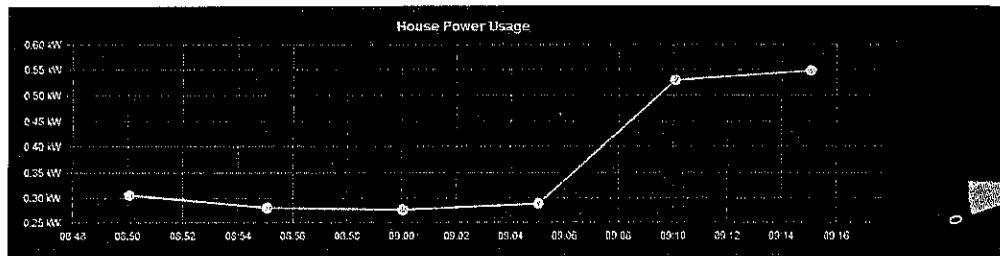
The new AMI system provides Wheatland quicker notification of meter failures at both a communication and hardware level. Integrating the AMI system with Wheatland's member service software system has provided additional operational efficiencies and improved member service.

State of the Art Outage Management System:

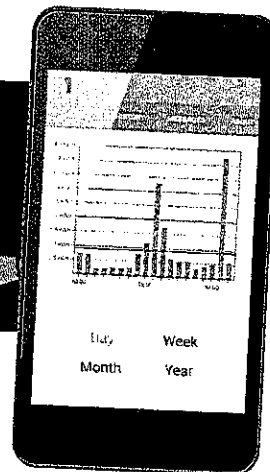
The AMI system has allowed for faster, more efficient outage detection and diagnosis, as well as reduced restoration times. System operators can ping meters to get a clearer picture of what is happening in the field and deploy restoration field crews more efficiently. In many cases, the AMI system identifies the outage, a crew is dispatched, and power is restored—all without any members calling to report the outage.

In addition to these





Pairing Wheatland's AMI system with other technology like The Eagle energy monitor allows members to make informed energy efficiency decisions.



improvements, installation of these new meters has allowed members the ability to access their usage data down to the hour, on a daily basis through SmartHub. Accessing this data puts a wealth of information at the member's fingertips, allowing them to make informed decisions about their energy usage and compare usage to previous days, months and years.

Make Informed Choices with SmartHub

Login to your online Wheatland Electric account and you'll notice a more powerful, efficient and streamlined experience designed to help you make smarter energy choices. By utilizing SmartHub technology, co-op members can now access these great benefits:

- View your electric usage data, down to the hour;
- See how temperature affects heating and cooling usage;
- Compare usage between months with temperature data;
- Set usage markers, thresholds and alerts;
- Receive bill reminders; and
- View Wheatland's social media feeds.

To access SmartHub from your desktop, simply click "Pay Bills" at the top right of our website at www.weci.net and login with your email address and password. Setting up a new online account is quick and simple, too.

You can also access SmartHub on the go by downloading the free mobile app on your Apple or Android device. Simply search for "smarthub" in the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

In-Home Energy Monitor

In addition to utilizing Wheatland's SmartHub

technology, members can also track their energy usage using an in-home energy monitor. The Rainforest Eagle Energy Gateway is a consumer energy monitor that connects to two-way advanced metering networks using the wireless ZigBee® Smart Energy Profile. By providing access to current energy use, historical data, energy pricing and alerts, the Eagle connects consumers to information necessary for successful energy efficiency programs. The Eagle is a pocket-sized device that connects wirelessly to your AMI meter to continuously report energy use and cost.

One Wheatland member in Great Bend, David Schraeder, is taking advantage of the technology and monitoring his energy usage. Schraeder uses the Eagle to get power use from his meter. "Right now, I have the Eagle logging my power usage every few minutes to a graphing system," said Schraeder. I also have a custom skill on my Amazon Echo that I can ask for my power usage and it will give it to me."

Schraeder has been using the Eagle for a couple of months and already sees the benefits: "I am more aware of how much power I am using and hopefully using that information to lower my usage," said Schraeder.

Wheatland's new AMI system has brought with it a number of benefits for both the cooperative and you, our members. From improved operational efficiencies, to increased access to meter data for both members and Wheatland, the list of benefits will only continue to grow. Beyond that, as members like Schraeder have seen, by utilizing and leveraging our existing technology and infrastructure with other technologies available in the utility industry we can help give you access to even more tools and information. Access to more data and timely use information ultimately gives our members the information they need to make better decisions on how they use electricity.

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