

Smart Meter Installations on the Rise

By **LISA WOOD**

The grand overhaul of the electric power system is underway, and a key technology creating big changes for customers and electric companies continues to be the smart meter. While deployment of smart meters began a decade ago, electric companies continue to find novel ways to create value from the data smart meters provide and the underlying communications network of which they're a part.

According to the Institute for Electric Innovation's most recent report, *Electric Company Smart Meter Deployments: Advancing Grid Modernization and Customer Solutions*, electric companies had installed 70 million smart meters in roughly 55 percent of U.S. households by the end of 2016. This number is expected to increase to 75 million smart meters by the end of 2017, and 90 million by 2020. With a decade of experience in deploying smart meters, electric companies realize that smart meters provide a solid, smart foundation for an increasingly clean and digital energy grid with more distributed energy resources (DERs). As shown in our report, regulators in several states expedited smart meter installation schedules to deploy this critical technology to customers.

Powering Lives Using Data

Electric companies have made remarkable strides in their ability to use smart meter data proactively to improve operations, integrate

DERs, deliver energy information to customers, and quickly restore power when outages occur. Hurricanes Harvey and Irma underscore this last point and demonstrate how smarter energy infrastructure speeds recovery efforts following major storms.

Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) serves nearly 5 million customer accounts in Florida. The state is no stranger to major storms and the damage that can ensue. As a result, FPL has invested heavily in energy grid modernization to enhance grid resiliency and to improve its ability to restore power when outages do occur. To date, FPL has installed 4.8 million smart meters and has deployed thousands of intelligent grid devices and smart switches that help detect and prevent issues for customers.

Investments in digital grid technologies and data analytics—including smart meters—greatly improved FPL's ability to respond to customers and to restore power following Hurricane Irma.

During Hurricane Harvey, CenterPoint Energy used its network of 2.4 million smart meters and thousands of intelligent grid switching devices to help accelerate restoration efforts. CenterPoint used real-time analytics to correlate weather and flood information with outages, providing operations with critical situational awareness and decision-making tools that enabled the company to send the right crews to the right outages.

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The smart meter success story is still being written, but what Harvey and Irma taught the industry and its stakeholders is that investments in stronger, smarter, and more resilient energy grids help to speed restoration. Data is changing the industry, and new tools are being developed that use data to help reduce outages, improve response times, and speed recovery efforts for customers. **EP**



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The Institute for Electric Innovation focuses on advancing the adoption and application of new technologies that will strengthen and transform the energy grid. The Institute's members are investor-owned electric companies that represent about 70 percent of the U.S. electric power industry and are committed to an affordable, reliable, secure, and clean energy future.

