

# Ameren Illinois to update Riverbend customers to smart meters this year

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ALTON – Ameren Illinois will be upgrading as many as 39,000 electrical and natural gas meters throughout the Riverbend, the company announced Tuesday.

This move is part of the company's multi-year plan to improve service reliability and create jobs in Central and Southern Illinois, a release from Ameren Illinois stated. These upgrades will occur in Alton, Bethalto, Brighton, Cottage Hills, Dow, East Alton, Elsah, Godfrey, Grafton, Hartford, Roxana and South Roxana. They have been described as “enhancements” by Ameren Illinois, adding customers will receive more information before the scheduled upgrades take place in February. Work will continue into the summer months.

“This advanced technology will provide our customers with access to more choices for pricing options and energy efficiency tools to help them manage their energy usage and better control their costs,” Madison County Division Director for Ameren Illinois Derek Cliff said in the release. “It will also enable us to more quickly detect system disruptions, prevent outages and restore service.”

According to the release, the upgrades will work with other upgrades being done by Ameren Illinois to detect and isolate outages. This will create a smart network Ameren Illinois hopes will help them restore services “more promptly.” The smart meters also promise to help customers “take an active role in controlling their energy usage and costs.” Part of that active role includes the device keeping customers aware of their energy usage so they can better manage it.

Customers will be alerted to these upgrades, but do not have to be present for them to occur as long as their meters have “clear and safe access” to Ameren Illinois or Donco contracting crews, who will be displaying Ameren Illinois photo-ID badges. These workers will not ask for a payment of any kind, but will leave a door hanger when the work is completed. Each upgrade will take 10-15 minutes.

Upgrading the meter system to provide a much more informed smart grid is a portion of Ameren Illinois's long-term approach to its natural gas and electric delivery infrastructure, the release said. These projects have a goal of adding new technology and fortifying the energy grid.

According to the release, since 2012, these plans have improved reliability across Ameren Illinois's coverage area by 19 percent while saving customers as much as \$45 million a year. This has also allowed them to add more than 800 employees and utilize 1,400 Illinois-based contract workers. These efforts have gotten Illinois ranked second in the country for its smart grid policy, the release stated.