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News Roundup

Standards jump ahead... Consumers resist Smart Grid... New fed agency for clean energy loans?... T-Mobile enters fray... Shortage of engineers threatens Smart Grid future...

May 5, 2009

Don't miss our separate **Stimulus News Roundup**, updated every week with the latest guidelines, tools, and announcements.

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NIST, IEEE, NAESB and LBNL announce key standards efforts. For years we had too little standards work. Suddenly the Smart Grid is inundated. Leading the way is the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which is moving ahead on an interoperability roadmap. The first workshop was April 28-29. The second workshop is May 19-20.

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) will convene its first meeting June 3-5 to hash out interoperability issues. Scheduled for Intel's headquarters in Santa Clara, CA, the event will bring together representatives from IT, communications, networking, and electric power. The IEEE standards effort, called P2030, will address everything from wireless communications to energy storage.

The North American Energy Standards Board (NAESB) is jumping on the standards bandwagon as well. NAESB has filed a series of demand response standards with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The standards address how to measure and verify demand response products for the wholesale electricity market. The effort, which includes 31 business practice standards and 40 definitions, is intended as a first step towards transparency, accountability and consistency. According to NAESB President Rae McQuade, the organization will now move ahead with more granular standards.

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, meanwhile, has proposed standards for demand response at the building level. The lab's Demand Response Research Center has proposed an open, non-proprietary data model called Open ADR (Open Automated Demand Response) that will allow any interested party to build products around it.

Quick Take: If widely adopted, these proposals could further unleash the demand response and Smart Grid markets. Both vendors and utilities must watch these efforts very carefully, or they risk being stranded with obsolete technology that doesn't talk the right standards.

Summary of April NIST workshop from California PUC Commissioner Rachelle Chong

- [NIST Smart Grid Web page](#)
- [CNET article on IEEE standards](#)
- [Computerworld article on IEEE standards](#)
- [Registration for remote viewing of the IEEE meeting](#)
- [NAESB press release](#)
- [ElectricNet article on the LBNL standards](#)

Smart meters and Smart Grid come under consumer fire. Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Rebecca Smith outlines consumer concerns about smart meters. Critics say the devices will cost more than the consumers save in energy bills and that utilities are likely to pass the expense onto customers. They also worry that consumers will have to install their own in-home displays and networks to get any savings. Others suggest that smart metering will make it easier (and therefore more likely) for utilities to disconnect customers who are even slightly behind in paying bills. Consumer advocates feel there are cheaper and more cost-effective ways for customers to reduce energy use and save money.

Meanwhile, a Pennsylvania policymaker is likewise predicting a backlash soon in Pennsylvania, especially around siting of new lines and substations. James Seif suggests "community networks" to bring all the stakeholders to the table in advance and to create an "incentive-based process – rather than the traditional coercive one."

Quick Take: This is a marketing failure on the part of utilities, many of whom still have a "there, there, Daddy knows best" attitude toward their customers.

- [Smart Meter, Dumb Idea? in the Wall Street Journal](#)
- [Backyard Backlash in Pennsylvania article at PennLive.com](#)

NPR schools America on Smart Grid issues. In a multipart series, National Public Radio recently explored various aspects of grid modernization and renewable energy for its listeners. Topics included ways to make renewable energy reliable, issues surrounding transmission lines, saving money with smart meters, whether a Smart Grid is a green grid,

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SMART GRID NEWS TALK BACK BUZZ

Will it work (Smart Grid)
Hello

The grid in America is a one way grid, from source to home/business. I know that monitoring is being done, but how can a source such as solar generated from a home or business be put back into the grid? Wouldn't that be like a salmon trying to swim upstream? If its a case of replacing our entire grid system, ...

[Talk Back right now to George P](#)

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Smart Grid Policy & Implementation Forum
 June 23-24, 2009 • Arlington, Virginia
www.events.platts.com

GRIDWISE EXPO *ConnectivityWeek*
Santa Clara CA Jun 8-11, 2009
www.GridWiseExpo.com

SMART GRID NEWS SCORE CARDS

costs and benefits, and more. Summaries and audio are available at the NPR Web site.

Quick Take: As the story immediately above makes perfectly clear, this is the year the industry must figure out how to tell the Smart Grid story to consumers and regulators. This NPR series is a good start.

[Main page for NPR's "Power Hungry" series](#)

Federal bill proposes new clean energy investment fund inside DOE. The Department of Energy already has offices dedicated to fossil energy, energy efficiency, and electric reliability (among others). Now a bipartisan bill proposes to establish a Clean Energy Deployment Administration within DOE. The new office would provide loans and loan guarantees to environmentally friendly technologies that diversify the nation's energy supply, using a clean energy investment fund created from collected payments and fees.

Quick Take: This is just one of a host of new energy measures under consideration by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee. Chairman Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) hopes to have a comprehensive energy package approved by the panel by the Memorial Day holiday on May 25.

[Reuters article on the new bill](#)

T-Mobile joins the rush to the Smart Grid market. On the heels of announcements from AT&T and Verizon, cell phone carrier T-Mobile staked its own claim to the wireless Smart Grid space. T-Mobile recently introduced a new SIM card to provide wireless connectivity to smart meters. Unlike the SIM cards used in cell phones, the new T-Mobile device is the size of a pinhead and able to withstand outdoor weather. The company also announced a partnership with smart meter manufacturer Echelon to include the SIM in its meters. The two companies will also team up to run smart meter services over T-Mobile's wireless networks.

Quick Take: Each telecom is taking a slightly different slant. AT&T has partnered directly with SmartSynch, while Verizon has established an Open Network Initiative to certify anybody's meters. T-Mobile's approach has an added dimension – a tiny SIM that can be dropped into almost any meter from any manufacturer.

[CNet news report](#)

[Fast Company report](#)

[Information Week report](#)

Lack of engineers could threaten Smart Grid future. Some 45% of engineers in U.S. electrical utilities are expected to retire or leave in the next five years, according to a survey from the Center for Energy Workforce Development. That could translate into a need for some 7,000 new engineers for electric utilities and more than double that number for the entire power industry. But replacements may be hard to come by. "The current graduation rate from U.S. university electric power engineering programs is not sufficient to meet our nation's current and future needs," says Wanda Reder, President of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)'s Power & Energy Society. In response, that group has led the U.S. Power and Energy Engineering Workforce Collaborative in publishing a 14-page report calling on industry, government, and education to take immediate action to address the problem.

[Utilities Online article](#)

[U.S. Power and Energy Engineering Workforce Collaborative report \(PDF\)](#)

[Related IEEE Web site](#)

Amperion demonstrates station-to-station broadband over power line communications. Tewksbury, MA-based Amperion, a privately held company founded by American Electric Power (AEP), recently completed a demonstration of high speed, IP-based broadband communications over electric utility transmission lines. With support from host utility AEP and the Department of Energy, Amperion successfully connected three substations using its broadband over power line (BPL) technology. The goal is to provide data communications capable of supporting a wide range of Smart Grid applications. "Using BPL for communications between stations extends the coverage of utility communications networks to topographical areas that are hard to reach with fiber in a cost-effective way," said Amperion CEO Nachum Sadan in a company press release.

Quick Take: Although it seems unlikely BPL will ever be a mainstream communications choice, it continues to find niche applications – in this case, in the transmission space.

[Amperion press release \(PDF\)](#)

81 Is Silver Spring Networks' "SEN" the Breakthrough We've Been Waiting For?

Jan 16, 2008

88 Triangle MicroWorks protocol stack software leaves no excuse for vendors to implement interoperable devices

Oct 21, 2008

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Standards Jump Ahead, etc.

First, regulators and policymakers should shoulder at least part of the burden of educating consumers.

Second, if consumers are not willing to pay for appliances and home gateways that take advantage of dynamic pricing, Smart Grid is not worth doing. Consumers have to want this stuff and the purveyors have to make a compelling case for adoption or its a waste of money.

Third, but really first, regulators and policymakers have to explain why electricity is a scarce enough resource to justify efficiency and demand management. At the same time, they have to allow electricity to seek levels that reflect the replacement cost of supply assets. Conservation doesn't pencil out at low prices and low prices indicate surplus rather than scarcity. Keeping rates as low as possible while asking people to use less sends contradictory messages that confuse consumers rather than helping them.

Jack Ellis - 05/06/2009 - 06:22

Paying for the smart meters
If one national goal is to reduce energy consumption, then a direct government subsidy/tax credit for smart meter installation would cause many consumers to start using them. The energy savings would be immediate.
John Castle - 05/06/2009 - 08:02

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