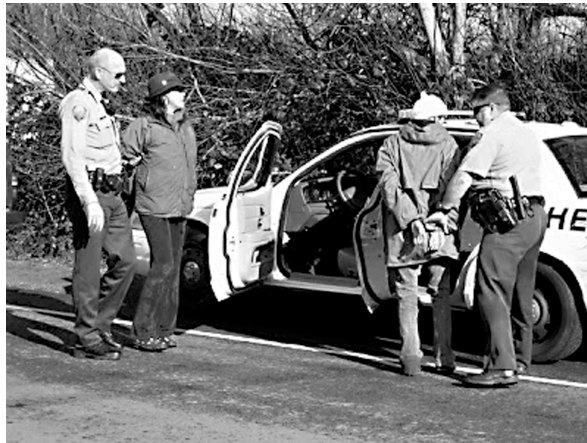


Taking back our power!

The CPUC's Flawed 'Smart Meter' Ruling will not stop the Drive for Community Wide, No Cost Opt-Outs.

By Mary Beth Brangan

[A shorter version of this article appears in the Pt. Reyes Light [here](#).]



Marin County Sheriff's Deputies arrest Katharina Sandizell-Smith (left) and Kristin McCrory (right) for blocking 'smart' meter installation trucks in Inverness Park, California, Wednesday, December 29, 2010. Photo: Courtesy of Scotts Valley Neighbors Against Smart Meters

Public Resistance to Wireless Pollution

Almost exactly four years ago, June McCrory and Katharina Sandizell-Smith, two young West Marin mothers, made national news by blocking the Inverness road to 'smart' meter installers and becoming among the first in the U.S. to be arrested over the meters. Their arrests shocked many in the industry into realizing that all was not well with their plans.

After an unprecedented multi year delay, a final decision on this contentious issue will be voted on by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Dec. 18, 2014.

Those of us in West Marin and Fairfax became leaders in the fight against forced installation of so-called 'smart' meters. We joined leaders in Sebastopol and Scotts Valley and then beyond in vociferously resisting because of health, safety, security and privacy concerns which we testified about at Marin city council meetings.

Fairfax City Council's resolution asserting the right of communities to opt out helped kick off what eventually became 57 cities, counties and one tribe to officially object. Many called for moratoriums on installation; over a dozen made installation illegal.

Beginning early in 2010, we brought our concerns about so-called 'smart' meters to the attention of folks here in West Marin at a packed meeting at the Dance Palace.

PG&E Agents Lied and Spied, Labeled Us 'Insurgents'

Our Marin County based online group, SmartWarriorMarin, initially the most active, was infiltrated by PG&E workers using false names. Later, when PG&E's 'smart' meter project director, William Devereaux, tried to infiltrate the EMFSafety Coalition's online group with a false name, Ralph, he neglected to remove his real name from his email and was recognized. Shortly thereafter, PG&E released hundreds of emails to the media that it had purloined from our group strategy discussions. In e-mail exchanges between executives, opponents of 'smart' meters were referred to as 'insurgents.' Subsequently the CPUC ordered an investigation into the PG&E spying and PG&E was eventually forced to pay a \$390,000 fine to the CA general fund as well as to institute a code of ethics for similar online situations.

We had wondered when we organized to be at the Santa Rosa truck yard at 7:30 am one chilly morning in 2010 to block the 'smart' meter installation trucks, how the trucks had completely vanished! The company had gotten the message from our email discussion and had moved them before we came.

Massive Public Testimony

For years, hundreds of people spoke out at the bi-weekly CPUC business meetings in San Francisco. PG&E and CPUC President Michael Peevey were getting nervous. People related similar heart-wrenching stories of being totally physically devastated by the effects of the 'smart' meter's incessant pulsing microwaves. Many people close to banks of multiple meters in apartment buildings or condominiums, were especially injured. Finally after sitting through many hundreds of such testimonies, President Peevey declared that an opt out would be offered and established an official CPUC proceeding to work out the details.

Playing in a Rigged Game

After producing dozens of videos, writing articles, researching and writing blogs, organizing events and giving presentations, chasing installer trucks out of Bolinas and blocking trucks with friends in Stinson Beach, testifying at and videotaping CPUC meetings, my partner and EON co-director, Jim and I became legal intervenors on behalf of the public at the CPUC proceeding. We argued for community wide opt out as well as for no cost opt out. After all, we never opted in – why should we be forced to pay to *not* have something? Doesn't being forced to pay *to not be harmed* constitute extortion?

Once the official proceeding began, those of us who were now embroiled in the Byzantine CPUC rules no longer showed up at the regular business meetings and the hubbub somewhat quieted. Peevey boasted at a CPUC meeting that he was praised "by the Whitehouse" for effectively dealing with the activists. (Federal stimulus funds were behind the rollout.) It was true, the furor died down, with the energy being dissipated by legal maneuvers.

Nevertheless, we all continued on.

We here in Marin, together with our colleagues in Sebastopol and Santa Cruz, gathered the critical information damning the 'smart' meter technology and set a tone that has

reverberated throughout the world. Pushback against microwave emitting meters is now happening everywhere throughout the U.S., Canada, Australia and Europe.

Medical, Cyber-Security and Safety Warnings Ignored

After repeated thorough investigations, our fears about the techno plan were validated again and again. The World Health Organization's International Agency for Cancer Research, IARC, concluded that microwaves in the frequencies used by wireless devices, including 'smart' meters, are a class 2 B , possible carcinogen, as is asbestos, arsenic and benzene. (If the peer-reviewed studies that weren't allowed to be considered by IARC had been included, many independent scientists believe that microwave frequencies should be classified as a class 1 A carcinogen.) Can you think of another instance where it is legal to force a class 2 B carcinogen device onto your home?

The American Academy of Environmental Medicine issued a letter directly to the CPUC calling for an immediate moratorium on installation of the meters, citing many peer-reviewed studies showing biological effects from pulsing microwave frequencies.

Security experts constantly warn of dramatically increased vulnerability to the electrical grid by cyber attacks because of wireless 'smart' meters. James Woolsey, former head of the CIA has said that the wireless 'smart' meter technologies make the grid stupid.

Thousands of fires have been reported and at least one California and one Nevada death caused by the meter fires. These have been dealt with by utility out of court settlements with gag orders. Canadian Saskatchewan utility CEO Robert Watson resigned in disgrace because of having to recall all meters due to a rash of fires. Plus now utilities are profiting from selling individual ratepayers' private data gathered by meters.

All this risk and yet studies by various attorneys general, including [Illinois](#) and the [auditor-general of Ontario](#), Canada's legislature, have shown these meters result in [little to no energy savings](#) and no benefits to ratepayers. Instead, rates have gone up.

Since the meters continuously bounce thousands of powerful microwave emissions between neighboring meters 24/7, (signals can travel 1 mile) an individual opt out doesn't remove the harmful emissions. Multiple banks of meters on apartments and condominiums produce really lethal amounts of radiation; therefore, community wide opt out is the only solution.

Though stating in the 'smart' grid proceeding that health issues would be addressed in the opt-out proceeding, Peevey and the CPUC Judge did not allow any health information to be submitted at all. They then claimed that since we had not presented any convincing data they determined there were no health effects!

Peevey says, "Community-wide opt-outs are 'undemocratic!'"

Unfortunately, at the Dec. 4 CPUC meeting, the Commissioners discussed the proposed decisions and decided against allowing communities to opt out and to require those

refusing a 'smart' meter to pay for the privilege of not having one. Mr. Peevey actually ridiculed as 'undemocratic' communities that voted for community wide opt out.

Though it will still be possible to opt out, you will have to pay a \$75 fee upfront and then \$10 extra per month; low income CARE ratepayers pay \$10 upfront and \$5 per month, pricing it out of range for many poor people.

Come and Express Your Outrage...

We encourage everyone outraged at this injustice and willful ignoring of people pleading on behalf of their health, safety, security and privacy to be at the December 18 meeting to demand community opt out and no fees. 8:30 AM, California Public Utilities Commission, Van Ness at McAllister, San Francisco.

We may have lost this round, but this patently illegal affront to people's right to health and safety and to the right of elected officials of cities and counties to protect their constituents, will be challenged in court.

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Mary Beth Brangan and Jim Heddle are Co-Directors of EON, the Ecological Options Network. They are award-winning film-makers of Public Exposure: DNA, Democracy and the Wireless Revolution and many other social & environmental issue documentaries produced in the last two decades which have been broadcast and toured nationally and internationally; aired in Congress, the United Nations, on PBS, ABC, CNN, cable; and used in parliaments, universities, libraries and by citizens' organizations and NGO's worldwide. Residents of Bolinas, they organize, educate and produce media supporting people confronting current survival challenges. www.eon3.net; YouTube.com/eon3; EON3emfblog.net