

Smart meters blamed for hydro bill spikes

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BC Hydro smart meters are being blamed for dramatic spikes in power bills this winter, but the company denies the controversial devices are leading to bigger bills.

Susan McDonnell contacted Steele on Your Side after receiving a \$745 power bill in December for her one-bedroom Kitsilano condo – a jump of more than 1,000 per cent.

"You open the envelope and you look at that and think 'what are you thinking?' I'm thinking they moved the decimal point," she said of receiving the bill.

McDonnell was paying \$61 monthly on BC Hydro's equalization program. She contacted the company to explain why her bill was so much higher.

"Just the same story -- nobody could answer any questions, it's just the way it is, and basically I was just left with 'lets just suck it up and pay it,'" she said.

McDonnell grew suspicious that the increase could be because of her new smart meter, that was installed just weeks before the massive bill.

Jim Nicholson, director of customer care for BC Hydro, said the likelihood of it being the smart meter is "very remote."

"If I had a bill that was out of line -- that seemed out of line -- I'm going to be looking for reasons why -- you know did we leave a bunch of lights on? Ah, smart meters. There's some new technology, I wonder if that had something to do with it?" he said.

Nicholson insists the meters are all tested, calibrated and meet government standards. He said there is no link between the new meters and bill spikes.

Just to be sure, BC Hydro sent a team to McDonnell's condo to run tests on her new smart meter. The company said it is working properly.

After reviewing her past bills and energy usage, Hydro says the condo dweller just wasn't paying enough each month to match her consumption and now has to play catch-up.

McDonnell said it feels unfair that the consumer is left with the onus of having to prove they aren't using excess energy, and BC Hydro is only responsible for the meter.

"I don't know where to go with this -- all they keep saying is suck it up and pay the bill," she said.

Her only recourse now is to file a complaint with the BC Utilities Commission through its website.

The complaint process, which can also be used for any other provincial energy provider, should only be used as a last resort to solve a billing issue.

Related: [BCUC Complaints](#)

Steele on Your Side has heard from dozens of viewers who say their hydro bills have doubled or tripled since their smart meter was installed.

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