PPL Electric Utilities' Automated Meter Reading Project Will be Largest of Its Kind in U.S.

To enhance customer service and improve operating efficiency, PPL Electric Utilities announced today (5/7) that it will move forward with automated meter reading technology for all of its nearly 1.3 million customers in Pennsylvania.

(Photo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/19981015/PHTH025)

"We have successfully concluded the testing phase we started in February and are committing to replace every electric meter in our system by the end of 2004," said Michael E. Bray, president of PPL Electric Utilities.

Bray described the $160 million project as an investment in efficiency, service quality and customer satisfaction.

"This fundamental change in the way we serve customers reaffirms our commitment to service excellence and will help us maintain our leadership position among electric utilities for customer satisfaction," he said.

This will be the largest automated meter reading project undertaken to date by an electric utility and the largest project using two-way communications technology for the meters.

With two-way communications technology, PPL Electric Utilities will be able both to receive information from the meter and send information to the meter.

For most customers, automated meters will look no different than the meters they currently have. The automated meters come with small transmitting devices that send electricity-use information through power lines to equipment installed at substations. From there, the information is sent to PPL Electric Utilities by phone lines.

PPL Electric Utilities has signed contracts with two companies to provide metering equipment and software. Missouri-based DCSI -- a subsidiary of ESCO Technologies, Inc. -- will provide metering for more than 99 percent of customers using its TWACS® (Two-Way Automatic Communication System) technology.

About 6,000 business customers will receive meters that report electricity-use information directly using wireless telephone technology. That metering will be provided by Comverge Technologies, Inc., of New Jersey.

Automated meter reading has benefits for the customers and the company, Bray noted.

"Automated meters will greatly reduce estimated bills because weather, pets and other factors will not prevent us from collecting electricity-use information," Bray said. "They also help us provide more detailed electricity-use information to customers, which will be important as Pennsylvania's competitive electric market progresses."

From a business standpoint, PPL Electric Utilities will reduce costs because it no longer will need to read meters manually.

The project will affect about 175 meter reader positions and related jobs in metering operations across the company.

"Our meter readers have done an outstanding job through the years, serving customers, representing PPL positively in the community and working cost- effectively," Bray said.

"Although technology has provided a more effective way to read meters, we appreciate the work done by meter readers and are making efforts to place them in other positions in the company. We have negotiated agreements with the union that give meter readers the opportunity to volunteer as installers of the automated meters," he said.

Customers will continue to receive timely and accurate bills during the conversion to automated meter reading. PPL Electric Utilities will read meters manually each month in areas until replacements are completed.

The project schedule is as follows:

-- Lehigh Valley, Bucks and Montgomery counties: now through early 2003.
-- Lancaster area: summer 2002 through spring 2003.
-- Harrisburg area: fall 2002 through summer 2003.
-- Scranton area and Poconos: spring 2003 through spring 2004.

-- Wilkes-Barre, Hazleton, and Schuylkill and Carbon counties: summer 2003 through spring 2004.
-- Williamsport, Bloomsburg, Sunbury, Lock Haven areas: fall 2003 through fall 2004.

PPL Electric Utilities is a subsidiary of PPL Corporation (NYSE: PPL). Headquartered in Allentown, Pa., PPL Corporation controls or owns more than 10,000 megawatts of generating capacity in the United States, sells energy in key U.S. markets, and delivers electricity to nearly 6 million customers in Pennsylvania, the United Kingdom and Latin America.

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