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The Smart Grid: Licensed or Unlicensed Spectrum

Today the IEEE announced their smart grid initiative, defining smart grid interoperability of the electric power system. It utilizes communications technologies to achieve seamless operation for electric generation, delivery, and end-use benefits. According to Lorie Wigle, general manager of Intel's Eco-Technology Program Office, "To accelerate deployment of a smart energy infrastructure, the industry must work toward interoperability and the creation of standards".

According to the Smart2020 report, smart grids and smart buildings, have the potential to avert 3.71 gigatons of CO2, worth \$464 Billion (US) in global energy cost savings, by the year 2020.

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Smart meter software company **Grid Net**, is betting that WiMAX can deliver smart meters for utilities, says Reuters. Ray Bell, a former Cisco networking and CEO of **Grid Net** says their WiMAX-based smart meter, built by GE, uses an Intel WiMAX chip, **Grid Net** software, and is the first truly open-standards based approaches to building a meter.

The Smart Grid will help empower smarter energy choices.

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"You don't need GE, Grid Net or Intel to build this meter," he explains. Open standards mean third parties will be able to build various applications and devices in conjunction with it, helping to dramatically drive down cost.

WiMAX chip sets currently cost around \$36, says Bell, but in a year they'll be closer to \$12, and in another 6 months they could hit \$8 or even \$6. Grid Net's meter went on sale to select utility customers this March. Within a year and a half he expects the price to drop low enough to undercut any of the meters on the market that use proprietary technology.

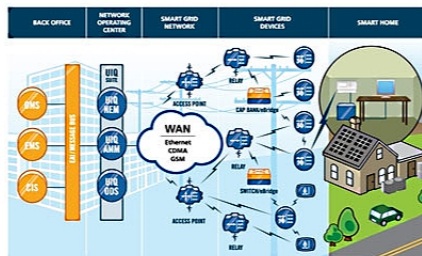


While **Silver Spring Networks** uses unlicensed 900 MHz spectrum and some cellular networks for its wireless technology, **Grid Net** is focusing solely on WiMAX. Full Spectrum's FullMAX broadband solution is also based on Mobile WiMAX. It claims to support all frequencies from 40 MHz to 958 MHz (tunable in 5 kHz steps), in channel sizes from 200 kHz to 10 MHz in width.

Sensus makes a variety of Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) solutions for water, gas, electric, and heat utilities. The city of **Corpus Christi** became one of the first cities in the United States to implement city wide Wi Fi, mainly to facilitate AMR. **Accele Wireless** creates tablet software for inspectors in the field.

The **Utilities Telecom Council**, a trade group made up of utilities and grid vendors, says utilities need access to dedicated radio spectrum. WiMAX runs over licensed wireless spectrum, which is generally more reliable and secure than unlicensed frequencies. On the other hand, the spectrum is more expensive.

The Smart Grid is expected to give consumers new options that enable them to engage in "electricity markets." It will seamlessly integrate all types and sizes of electrical generation and storage systems with universal interoperability to support a "plug-and-play" level of convenience.



President **Barack Obama** asked the United States Congress "to act without delay" to pass legislation that included doubling alternative energy production in the next three years and building a new electricity "smart grid". On April 13th, 2009, **George W. Arnold** was named the first National Coordinator for Smart Grid Interoperability.

Dailywireless has more on AMR, including Google: Smart Power R US, 900 Mhz Telemetry, Traffic Cameras and ITS and the Corpus Christi Cloud .

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