Article Side

Smart Metering - the privacy issue by Becky

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Smart metering aims to reduce costs and bills for consumers; however concerns have been voiced over how private the transmitted data is and what it will be used for. Some see smart meters as surveillance devices that can monitor the behaviour of a household, leading to the invasion of privacy. The data wonâ€™t be able to analyse all consumer behaviour but could detect whether you have an old fridge or old washing machine or whether you forgot to turn of the light off. The only way for this data to be to be access is if the consumer gives consent.

DECC said that suppliers would generally not be allowed to access customers' "half-hourly energy consumption data, or to use energy consumption data for marketing purposes" without obtaining those individuals' "explicit (opt-in) consent"

The Government very much sees the individual consumer as the â€˜ownerâ€™ of any smart meter data collected from his or her home.

The DECC has in principle agreed that energy distribution network operators can have access to half-hourly energy consumption statistics so that those operators can maintain "efficient, co-ordinated and economical systems for the distribution of electricity and gas". The plans are subject to the approval of proposals the operators are due to draft over how this data could be combined in order to prevent each individual householdsâ€™ data from be identified.

Any specific smart metering privacy and data security requirements that are implemented by law or regulation in the UK will sit alongside the existing data protection and privacy laws administered by the UK Information Commissioner. These laws will apply to the collection and use of data, including personal data, using smart meters.

Energy law expert Chris Martin of Pinsent Masons said that data collected through smart metering was very gritty in nature. He said putting â€œtechnical security measuresâ€• in place to prevent smart meter data being inappropriately accessed is vital to the successful operation of the technology; this ensures security is kept high so data cannot be intercepted.

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A HREFâ€•http://www.wave2m.com/news/item/smart-meteringâ€•>Smart metering/A> is one more step to developing more sustainable energy solutions. Consumers and businesses can monitor their energy consumption and therefore make it easier for them to save energy, carbon emissions and money.

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