

Keep DTE from Removing Your Meter



Locking your meter with a shackle lock is the immediate best method to prevent installation. HOWEVER, this will only slow the utility company down. It is in your best interest to get a meter guard in the near future. This is because some installers are cutting locks or cutting the loop through which you put the lock. This document gives you preliminary information on locks, meter guards, and other devices. For specific information, click [here](#).

The only way to stop the utility company from installing a smart meter is to physically protect your meter. Sometimes people receive a notice from the utility saying that a meter will be installed sometime in the next few weeks. They won't tell you the day. It could happen the day after you receive the notice. Most meters are installed when people are not home. Even if you are home, the installer probably will not knock on your door. Installation sometimes occurs randomly: they install in part of a neighborhood, then come back a few weeks later and do more installations.



The loop on the electric box.

Does Telling the Utility Company You Don't Want the Meter Work? Some people have reported that when they ask the installer not to install, their request is granted. Please be aware, they *will* come back at a later date and install the meter. They will not forewarn you. We have received numerous phone calls from people who now have a smart meter because the installer assured them they wouldn't install. Weeks or months later, the installer was back, and a smart meter was slapped on their home. So unless you protect your meter, a meter *will* be installed, whether now or in the future.

Note that DTE and Consumers Energy don't install gas meters and electric meters at the same time.

Important Update as of November 1, 2013 and March 2015.

- 1. DTE is cutting locks and the loop you put the locks through. They have been cutting locks and meter boxes all across southeastern Michigan.**
- 2. DTE is cutting the locks of Tatar Guards or prying the guards partially off and installing smart meters.**
3. DTE installers are [authorized](#) to do this.

4. Even if your meter is locked with a shackle lock, you might not be protected for long.
5. DTE installs on weekends, including Sundays. Installers jump locked gates and spiked fences and ignore signs. *And they cut locks and the loop you put the lock through. Do not think you are protected just because they said they won't install or left you alone last time. We cannot tell you how many calls we have gotten from people who thought they were safe and now have a smart meter on their home.*
6. DTE installs randomly. They hit one to three homes with locked meters in an area, then leave and come back another time. That way, all the other people in the area think they are safe because they've put up a sign, locked their meter, or been assured by DTE that *their* home will never get a smart meter. The fact they have not been to your home or area does *not* mean you are safe.

What to Do

- Get a meter cage.
- You don't have to listen to DTE's threats that they will cut off your electricity. You *can* refuse the meter. Tell the installer to list you as a refusal. Tell the installer you will wait until all appeals are settled before making a decision. [Read how one woman did this.](#)
- Photograph, record, and write up your interactions with them, then notify us. This will help us in our battles against DTE.
- Send a *certified* letter to DTE refusing the meters. Use the language in our [sample letters](#), because it preserves your legal rights and tells DTE to wait until our Court of Appeals case is decided.

DTE installers get paid by the number of meters they install, so they have a vested interest in getting the smart meter on your home. Most are respectful, but some DTE installers have been cutting locks. Sometimes they cut the loop at the bottom of the meter (the loop you put your lock through). Sometimes installers jump locked gates and spiked fences. They've also been threatening customers with a service shut-off if the customer doesn't permit installation of a smart meter. The installer *cannot* shut off your power. Moreover, DTE cannot legally shut off your electricity without at least 10 days' written notice.

Some customers are telling the installers to [get off](#) their property—and DTE installers are complying when the customer stands her ground. **Stand strong. If we all secure our meters and tell DTE to get off our property, we will have the force of community to**

stand against DTE—the threat of bad press will keep them at bay if they know that hundreds of us continue to secure our meters.

Some homeowners have listened to DTE’s threats, backed down, and allowed them to install the smart meters. Remember, DTE cannot shut off your electricity without giving you 10 days’ *written* notice, so unless and until you get actual written notice from them (not the *threat* of notice), stand your ground. In the unlikely event you do get such a letter from them, contact us immediately at (73four)-972-2677.

Saying no works for a while! However, because some installers are removing locked analog meters, cutting the loop through which you put the lock, you are well advised to do more to secure your meter. As noted above, this has now become DTE policy, thought it is being applied randomly.

What You Can Do

Be aware: DTE is not only cutting locks, they are cutting the loop through which you put the lock. The best way to protect your meter is to put a cage around it. You can buy or construct one.

Here is a list of what you can do:

1. **Buy a shackle lock.** Shackle locks can be purchased at a hardware or home improvement store or online. They are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to



cut and are very difficult to drill out. You need to use a shackle lock because DTE can easily cut a regular lock. The problem with the shackle lock is that DTE can cut the loop through which you put the lock. We don’t know whether DTE will make it a policy to do this. We do know what some installers (DTE contracts out the installation) have cut the loop and

have cut regular locks. *The shackle lock is your most secure solution until you can put up a bar or cage up to secure your meter. Please [click here](#) for more information on locks and cages and for precise instructions on how to secure your meter. If DTE cuts your lock or your cage, they have destroyed your property and legal action can be pursued.*

2. **Get a meter cage.**

3. **We suggest putting a video camera up and a sign telling the installer that he/she is being recorded.** You can sue them (in regular or small claims court) for destroying your property.
4. Put a sign up next to your meter refusing installation. You can hang a copy of the letter you have written to DTE next to your meter.
5. Lock gates. But remember, a locked gate is not enough. Some installers jump gates, even spiked fences. And just because they missed you one time doesn't mean they won't jump your gate the next time they come through. DTE and Consumers Energy do have a right to access their meter for reading and repair, so "No Trespassing" signs, while stating your feelings, do not really have any effect. A caged meter does.
6. [Let us know](#) that you have locked your meter, what kind of lock or cage you have used, and where you live. We are planning community action around these locked meters. By standing together as communities, we can retain our analogs.

If DTE cuts your lock or your cage, they have destroyed your property.

The more expensive the lock or cage, the less likely DTE is to destroy it. We believe we can bring suit against DTE if they do this. Here's what to do:

1. Take a picture of your meter with the lock, and take a close-up of the lock.
2. Take a picture of your meter's serial number.
3. If they cut the lock, call the police. Take photos before you touch the cut lock.
4. File a claim with the police.
5. Contact us.

If you are home when DTE comes by to install.

- Do what Shari K. did when they told her she had to have the meter put on: **Tell them you refuse and want to be listed as a refusal.** Shari told us:

I had a man from DTE come to my house last week saying, "I'm here to install your opt-out meter". I said, "NO THANK YOU!" and he said, "You don't have a choice. We either install this meter or we'll cut your power." I took some time trying to get ahold of my husband to find out what to do, and the installer was tired of waiting, so he said he was going to leave and put me on his list as a "refusal." So, if you're home when they come, I would refuse the meter. If they give you hard time just say PUT ME ON YOUR LIST AS A REFUSAL. That should at least buy some more time.

- If an installer comes to your door, or you catch them at your meter, immediately start videotaping, photographing, or audiotaping them and your interaction with them. Keep your camera or recorder handy, especially if you live in Plymouth or Ann Arbor. They CANNOT forbid you from recording them.
- If they're on your property, call your friends and neighbors immediately to come over. Witnesses matter. In one Ann Arbor community, the installers have been driven away multiple times by just one or two women coming out of their homes and telling the installers to leave: "She doesn't want the meter. Leave now."
- Immediately after the interaction, write down everything that happened, including time and date. We may use these affidavits in a lawsuit.
- Please send us any video, audio, or affidavits.
- Be sure to send DTE a certified letter telling them you refuse the smart meter and the opt-out meter. We have 3 sample letters to choose from. They include language that preserves your legal rights. You can add more, but be sure to keep the language regarding preserving your rights to appeal. We have a letter to opt out on general health grounds, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and on privacy grounds. To download these letters, [click here](#).

DTE cannot shut off your electricity without giving you notice.

Until you get written notice of a shut-off, please join in our efforts to keep our analog meters. A shackle lock, cage, or bar and a certified letter to DTE are essential.

If You Do Decide to Allow DTE to Install the Smart Meter or Opt-Out Meter

- Please note how long it takes them to remove your old meter and install the new.
- **Please note how long it takes them to disable the radio-transmitter if you choose the opt-out meter. Write down start and end times.** Then send that info to us. DTE is charging \$67 for the opt-out meter because they claim it takes a certain amount of time to disable the transmitter. We want to know if that's true.
- If you can, record the entire process with photos or video. They CANNOT forbid you from doing this. Send the photos to us.
- Send them a letter following the format of [these letters](#), telling them you want the meter off. Copy us and the Attorney General on this letter. miag@michigan.gov, SmartMeterEducationNetwork@gmail.com.

Complete instructions on how to attach a shackle lock, cage, or bar can be found [here](#).