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Inside PECO's smart meter debacle

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EDITOR'S CORNER

There appears to be a lot of subtle blame going around when it comes to the cause of recent incidences of approximately 30 overheating smart meters -- some of which resulted in fires -- with Sensus as the "sacrificial goat" (scapegoat, that is).

PECO pulls its smart meter contract from Sensus without explicitly saying why, but the public is led to speculate that it is because the Sensus meters were defective. Why else would PECO replace all of its existing, nearly 190,000 Sensus smart meters with Landis+Gyr, and then forge ahead with nearly 100,000 more new Landis+Gyr smart meter installations while scrapping the Sensus smart meter relationship?

One industry insider who wants to remain anonymous contends that it is because "PECO needed Sensus to take the fall."

In an interview with Greentech Media, PECO's Communications Manager said only that the Landis+Gyr meters "performed better in the field," based on an independent investigation but would not elaborate on what that meant. In the same article, Sensus said that they could not comment because they had not been apprised of the results of the report.

Is Sensus getting a raw deal from PECO?

"Yes," say some industry insiders -- because the "real" smart meter issue is overheating caused by a "hot socket," whereby meter boxes (all UL-tested by the way) do not allow for clean contact with meters.

An anonymous source stated that, given the sheer volume of meter installations, there were bound to be issues caused by dirty, misshapen or corroded meter box jaws and, when precautions were not taken by PECO installers to identify and address these problems, incidences of overheating and fires resulted.

In the "duly noted" category, more than 400,000 Sensus meters have been installed by Cobb Electric Membership Corporation without issue.

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