Orwellian Smart Grid May Get First Test in Europe - Coming to the US Soon

May 8, 2013 - We've published several articles at ACCESS about the so-called smart grid (See links below this article). If you are not familiar with this term, it refers to the country's electric grid system. As envisioned, when fully implemented the smart grid will allow consumers of electricity to see exactly how each and every appliance in their home is consuming electricity. But it will also allow electric utilities to view this information and give them the power to shut off individual appliances without your permission. In addition, it is highly likely that the government will also be able to access this information; ending privacy in your home as you currently know it. There is little doubt that a smart grid is coming to a utility near you. But it is arriving in Europe even sooner and the initial proposal for its use in the UK provides a glimpse of what Americans should expect.

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The United Kingdom is proposing that sensors be installed in all electric appliances that would monitor electric usage and allow the power company to shut them down without interference from their owners. The proposal is similar to ideas that have been floated in the United States, but the Europeans appear to be much closer to deploying it.

European Network Transmission System Operators for Electricity (ENTSO-E) has sent to proposal to the European Commission (the executive body for the European Union, responsible for proposing legislation) for approval. A ruling on the proposal is expected by the end of summer. If it is approved, it will then develop legislation to be sent to the European Parliament. That legislation would require manufacturers to install the sensors in all new appliances.

The stated goal of the proposal is avoid blackouts and brownouts by giving power companies the ability to switch off individual appliances. Publically, ENTSO-E has focused on sensor installation in temperature controlled devices; specifically air conditioners. But the actual proposal would require them in virtually all major appliances.

There are already calls in the UK to stop the proposal because of its intrusiveness.

The [Daily] Mail reported a former leadership candidate for Britain's conservative party, David Davis, saying "there is something Soviet about this."

"There is a Big Brother element to this – and it also shows the energy suppliers passing down their incompetence to the customers," Davis said. "They should be supplying energy as customers need it, not the when they want to give it. …It's a ridiculous idea and it should be opposed. I hope the government puts its foot down."

The energy strategy manager for appliance manufacturer Electrolux, Viktor Sundberg, too noted the Big Brother aspects of including such a sensor on an appliance.

"This method of shutting down household appliances could to be carried out almost instantly, saving the energy companies millions because they won't have to start up the turbines or pay huge industrial companies to cut production. Consumers are not benefiting at all and will be left paying more when they buy the appliances, as well as having their private goods controlled by outside forces," the Mail reported Sundberg saying.

If the proposal does become law in Europe, it will likely speed up the implementation of the smart grid in the United States as well. That implementation is already well underway. Many electric utilities in the US have already converted their electric meters to "smart meters." These meters can be read from a distance and are capable of providing detailed electric consumption information for each outlet in a metered home. The US proposal for the smart grid would specifically allow appliances to generate detailed usage information which could be shared and there are no privacy laws currently in place to protect consumers against the sharing of their personal information.

To read more about the smart grid and the privacy threat that it poses for all Americans, you look at the following past articles:

- Why Does The Government Need To Know If Your Oven Is On?

- White House Decides to Ask Question Again When it Gets Answers it Doesn't Like

- Obama Calls For Orwellian Smart Grid That Will End Privacy In Your Home As You Know It

- Electric Smart Grid Is More About Government Snooping Than Energy Savings

- CIA Chief Raises More Smart Grid Privacy Concerns

To read recent article from the UK on their proposed installation of smart grid technology, click on the links below:

- Fridges could be switched off without owner's consent to reduce strain on power stations

- Big brother to switch off your fridge: Power giants to make millions - but you must pay for 'sinister' technology

byJim Malmberg
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