



installations. California Energy Markets further reports that Capitola, Fairfax, Monte Sereno, Scotts Valley, and Santa Cruz (city and county) have joined San Francisco in asking for a halt to smart meter installation pending investigation of accuracy, billing, and other issues.

What is a regulator to do? In aggregate, these meters and their installation are very expensive. Should officials stop the statewide conversion because a few customers have received questionable bills? Should policy makers jump into action every time concerned citizens raise controversial health issues? Common sense might suggest that new equipment shouldn't be installed when public trust is lagging behind. The process could be put on hold until studies are completed, but at what cost? And let's suppose that those health questions won't be decisively resolved for quite some time - if ever. Should the movement to smart meters stop because no one can be entirely sure if there are related dangers?

Some customers want to have a choice - to be able to reject the installation of a smart meter on their property. As of now, the conversion is mandatory, and is likely to stay that way. Does the imposition of a mandatory change place a greater obligation on policy makers to ensure that everything is safe? State law suggests as much, in the form of the California Environmental Quality Act and other laws. Officials are supposed to look for the potential of significant impacts first, and act later. A full environmental study would have at least pointed out the concerns, and helped regulators to determine whether there was any kind of problem worth mitigating. But there was no such study, which is why the regulators and the utilities now face a bit of a problem.