

A smart meter.



Blairgowrie goes smart

Solomon Saohatse

City Power's pilot project of installing smart meters is well on its way in Blairgowrie.

The electricity-distributing giant says it has a roadshow that will educate residents about these meters, which will take place as soon as a date is decided.

"We have a mandate that says all conventional meters should be converted to smart meters by 2012 and Blairgowrie was identified as a good area to start in," said City Powers acting area manager Randy Sibran. The installation of the meters will not cost residents anything, although meter readers will issue customers whose accounts are in arrears with letters of notice to pay the outstanding amount within seven days or their electricity will be cut off.

"We are hoping to update customers' accounts before the next billing date.

"Customers whose accounts are in arrears will be able to make arrangements to pay off their debt with the City of Joburg," said City Powers Customers Service Area Manager Gail Dustan.

Bev Boswell of the Blairgowrie Residents Against Crime (Brac) asked if residents have a choice of installing the smart meters. She also asked what the phones accompanying the meters are for.

Dustan said, "It is well within our rights as a service provider to update our equipment at any given time to improve service delivery. This is precisely what the new phones allow for as they improve our channel of communication with our customers. "We had manuals that were meant to take customers through steps on how to use the new phone and the smart meter but unfortunately were forced to return them as we felt the language used was too technical and would confuse customers. We will distribute the new manuals to the public as soon as they have been simplified."

Did You Know?

Smart meters:

- can be read remotely by City Power or used as pre-payment system,
 - allow for accurate billing systems,
 - are read remotely, so there is no need for strangers to come to your property to take meter readings,
 - control the load through demand controllers,
 - reduce outages,
 - allow for better account management and
 - offer free emergency calls to the call centre.
- Details: Randburg Offices 011-793-1105, Call Centre 011-357-5555