

## TECHNOLOGY AT WORK

# Meter reading system brings changes

**W**e have begun deploying a new state-of-the-art meter reading system. This system will increase efficiency and lower our operating costs. Other benefits include up-to-the-minute use information and the potential to participate in energy management programs designed to lower costs.

We are excited about the change and want the transition to be as comfortable as possible. The new system will be made up of devices strategically placed throughout town to communicate with your meter. The new meters will have a two-way radio inside, so that the meter can be read remotely. Every account will receive a new meter. Our current plans involve changing out the meters west of Route 119 during January and February, then moving around town toward the Lost Lake area in March and April.

We are attempting to notify everybody by mail at least two days before we plan to change your meter. We will try to give you a one-week window for when the change will occur, but this can be difficult because we won't be changing meters during times of significant precipitation.

We will make an attempt to contact you by ringing your doorbell immediately before the meter change because you will lose power for a few minutes during the change. If you will not be home between the dates mentioned on the letter, we recommend that you save everything on your computers and turn them off each day until the change has been completed, to minimize the chance of losing data. It is not necessary to be present during the meter swap.

### Two major changes

There will be two significant changes that you will see with the installation of our new

system. In addition to not regularly seeing our meter reader at your home, the meters in town will be read at the same day and time. In the past, meters were read every business day of the month up until the 23rd. Shortly after your meter is changed, your read day will be changed to the 23rd. This means that customers who are currently read early in the month will see one bill that may have a billing period as long as 53 days. If this causes financial hardship, please let us know and we can spread the amount due over a couple of months.

If you have any questions or concerns, call Tammi or Kevin at 978-448-1150.

For more information, our past newsletters are available on line at [www.grotonelectric.org](http://www.grotonelectric.org) in the INFORMATION section. The Automatic Meter Reading articles are in the April 2006 and October 2006 newsletters.



*Ryan Andrews changing out the second of three meters at a duplex in town.*

## We trim trees for safety and reliability

Electric lines and equipment must be free from tree limbs and branches in order to operate safely and reliably. That's why we regularly trim and remove trees that threaten the integrity of our electric distribution system.

Each winter, after the leaves have fallen, we take the opportunity to get a good view of our lines and any tree branches that may affect service. We then remove branches that encroach upon our lines, and also prune and shape trees as needed to stop the growth of limbs toward the lines. Many times this requires us to remove smaller limbs that are not yet endangering the lines. This is important since young maple branches, for example, can grow at a rate of 16 to 30 inches per year.

As the work begins this winter, we will mail notices to all residents on streets that will be affected. If you have questions or requests regarding the trimming on your street, please contact us after you receive your notice.

If you see a branch rubbing on our electric lines, or there is a large dead tree affecting the lines, please contact us. Our Foreman will review each situation and decide if the Light Department needs to take action. Please remember that we do not remove trees if the work is not related to electric service.

We understand that trees are an important and attractive part of Groton's natural landscape. That's why we work to maintain a balance of high electric service reliability with maximum tree cover in town, guided by standards set by the American Arborist Society.

While the clearance needed for each line varies according to the size of the line, we always try to preserve as much of the tree as possible without jeopardizing safety or reliability. For more information on tree trimming, please visit the Tree Trimming section of our website at [www.grotonelectric.org](http://www.grotonelectric.org).

### New site for Christmas tree bonfire

There will be a Christmas tree bonfire on January 5, 2007 at 6 p.m. to light up the night sky behind the Groton Library. Please do not drop off trees at the Light Department. The collection area for trees this year will be behind the library. After January 5, please take your tree to the transfer station.

### Take time to be prepared

Even with the best planning, occasional power outages do happen. As we head into the worst of the winter storm season, here's what you should do to be ready for the unexpected:

- Make a storm kit now with things you will need if the power goes out. Include a battery-powered radio and a flashlight, along with a supply of batteries to run them. Also gather nonperishable food, bottled water, matches and candles, and a first-aid kit.
- Think about your personal situation. You may also need things like medications, baby formula, and pet food in an easy-to-reach place.
- Remember that most cordless phones won't work without a power supply, so you may want to have at least one corded phone in the house.
- For extensive advice on emergency preparedness, visit the Federal Emergency Management Administration's website at [fema.gov](http://fema.gov), or see the Homeland Security Administration's consumer information at [ready.gov](http://ready.gov).

### Be aware of holiday energy use

If your electricity use looks a little high on your January bill, you may want to think about how the holidays may have affected your electric use.

Decorative lighting indoors and out, as well as holiday cooking and entertaining, are just a few of the factors that can increase your electricity use. Holiday guests also mean more hot water for showers and laundry. New electric-powered toys and appliances can be a factor, too.

And just as the holidays arrive, so does the cold weather. Even if you don't heat with electricity, most systems need power to run motors, pumps or blowers. So if your January bill's usage seems a little high, the increase is probably only temporary. As you return to your routine, your energy use should return to normal.