



Rights & Rules on Smart Meter Installation: Know Before You Decide

1. 💰 Why You Should Care – Higher Billing & Financial Impact

Many consumers across India have reported a significant increase in monthly bills after smart meter installation. This is not an isolated incident—there are several unresolved issues with billing algorithms, faulty readings, and lack of real-time usage transparency.

Key financial concerns include:

- Unexplained spikes in electricity bills post smart meter installation
- Absence of timely complaint redressal or rollback options for incorrect billing
- No clear audit trail for consumers to verify real-time consumption
- Default switch to prepaid billing in some cases, which can be more expensive
- Additional fees for smart meter maintenance, upgrades, or remote disconnections
- Potential privacy breaches due to granular consumption data being transmitted and stored without robust safeguards
- Possible health risks from continuous RF-radiation emitted by smart-meter communication modules (studies are ongoing, but many residents remain concerned)

- Lack of a clear and accessible grievance-redressal mechanism for malfunctioning smart meters, leaving billing disputes unresolved for months

⚠️ What it means for you:

Even if you use the same amount of electricity, smart meters may cause your bill to go up. Until proper consumer protections, billing transparency, and error-correction mechanisms are in place, users should exercise their legal right to opt out.

Understanding the potential cost burden is crucial—only an informed and united consumer base can push back against unjust installations.

2. Smart Meters Are Not Mandatory for All Users

- **Karnataka High Court (June 2025):**
BESCOM clarified that smart meters are *only required* for **new or temporary** connections—not for existing electricity connections
- The Court has **temporarily halted mandatory installation** and asked BESCOM and the state government to **follow KERC guidelines**, which make it **optional** for current users.

- **A PIL (Jayalakshmi M vs State of Karnataka) highlighted that:**

“Except temporary installations... smart meter installation is at the consumer's choice.”



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Installation Of Smart Electricity Meters Only For New Houses, Not Existing Consumers: BESCO Tels Karnataka High Court

Mustafa Plumber

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3. States Where You Can “Opt Out” of Smart Meters

- **West Bengal (June 2025):**
The state government **suspended** smart-meter installation in homes and **allowed**

residents to revert to conventional meters

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No smart meters to be installed in West Bengal, announces state govt

By Jayatri Nag, ET Bureau • Last Updated: Jun 11, 2025, 11:58:00 PM IST

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Synopsis

Facing protests over inflated electricity bills after prepaid smart meter installations, the West Bengal government is allowing residential consumers to revert to traditional meters. While new smart meter installations are temporarily suspended for homes, commercial and government establishments will continue with the rollout.

4. What the Law Says (Across India)

- **Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020** – Section 47(5):
Consumers have the **legal right to choose** prepaid or postpaid meters
- **Electricity Act, 2003**

Section 55 mandates **metering**, but doesn't mandate **smart** meters specifically

5. What You Can Do If You're Pressured

1. **Know Your Rights**
 - No rule forces you to take a smart meter if you have an existing meter and your state's regulations follow consumer-choice frameworks.

2. **Refer to Guidelines**

- In Karnataka, cite **KERC's directive** and **High Court rulings**.
- Across India, point out the **Consumer Rights Rules (2020)** and Sections 55/166 of the Electricity Act.

3. **Push Back Firmly**

- Submit written refusals to your utility provider.
- File a complaint with your **State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SERC)** if pressured.
- Consider PIL or legal recourse—several cases are already in progress.

4. **Stay Informed via Court Updates**

- Keep an eye on ongoing court rulings in your region (e.g., Karnataka HC hearings).

5. **Leverage Local Precedents**

- Show how West Bengal successfully allowed consumers to opt out.
- Reference PILs in Karnataka and Maharashtra resisting forced installations

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- **You are entitled** to refuse a smart meter if you already have a functioning one—this is backed by **consumer laws, regulations, and court rulings**.
 - States like **West Bengal** and regions such as **Karnataka** have set clear precedents allowing opt-out options.
 - **Educate neighbors**: share this document, cite relevant laws and rulings, and encourage people to **assert their legal right to say NO**.