

Driven Out by Power Line Signals

Jack (not his real name) has been sensitive to wireless transmitters for well over a decade. For that reason he stays away from the cities. He and his girlfriend spend their winters in Arizona, and the summers in eastern Washington State.

In the spring of 2011, they traveled to their rented house in eastern Washington. When he arrived, he could immediately feel something had changed. It was as if a cell tower had been erected nearby, but he could not find one. It was unlikely to be the neighbors, since they lived on a large lot and he could still feel it when he drove some distance away. It seemed to be everywhere.

Jack's girlfriend stayed in the house while Jack drove back down to Arizona.

After asking around, they found out that the local utility had swapped out all of the electrical meters over the winter. The new smart meters communicate with the utility's computers by sending signals through the power line back to the substation. This is called power line communication (PLC) and is mostly used in rural areas.

The specific system used is called TWACS. This system works by transmitting pulses 120 times a second. Each pulse contains a brief signal of higher frequencies. Since all meters share a common wire, only one meter in the area can transmit at a time. Each household meter can transmit for only a few minutes each day, or even only once for several days.

The pulses travel for many miles and back feed into all houses on the grid. It makes no difference whether it is the meter on one's own house that transmits, or one on another house. There is a constant stream of pulses on all wires throughout the house. The household wiring, as well as the power lines along the streets, are all turned into unintentional antennas. The signal is not very powerful, but the antennas are huge and everywhere.

Jack came back up to eastern Washington a month later, but he had to camp in the back yard. The pulses bother him even fifty feet (15 meters) from the house, with the power line 150 feet (50 meters) on the other side of the house.

The house is rented. The couple decided not to bother complaining to the landlord and the utility company. Even if they got the old meter back it would not help. There is no way to stop the pulses coming from the outside. Instead, the couple will soon move away to an area without his menace.

This story is not written by "Jack", but he has reviewed and approved it for publication.

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