



# Smart Meter Project Customer Education Plan Implementation

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

# Overview

El Paso Electric (EPE) made significant progress with its Smart Meter Project in 2024, reaching 84% completion across Texas and New Mexico. The installations were supported by a comprehensive marketing and advertising strategy to keep customers informed of the ongoing installation process and introduce them to new tools available to them once they receive their smart meters. These tools are designed to help customers lower their energy consumption and save money while also helping EPE manage its load growth.

In 2024, EPE ran two advertising campaigns in English and Spanish to drive awareness of the project and encourage customers to take more control of their energy use. *The Installers* campaign was designed to educate residential customers about smart meter installations while the *Next Steps* campaign focused on encouraging customers to download the EPE mobile app, create an online customer account, and increase the use of EPE's smart energy tools.

In addition to the educational campaigns, EPE updated the smart meter website with a new section titled *My Smart Meter*, to educate customers on how to create an online account and use the smart energy tools. An explainer video and brochure were created to support these efforts. All materials were published in English and Spanish to serve EPE's bilingual customers.

Social media also played an integral role in EPE's 2024 customer education plan. Campaigns were cross-promoted on EPE's social channels, giving EPE an opportunity to actively engage with customers who had questions about the project. EPE developed an internal Q&A to anticipate questions and provide timely responses.

In addition, project updates were routinely communicated to customers via email, customer e-newsletters, and the local news media.

EPE's goal of fostering acceptance of smart meters and avoiding opt-outs is being achieved, with only 295 customers choosing to opt out to date (0.06% of EPE's 460,000 customers).

## Background

In 2023, El Paso Electric (EPE) officially launched its Smart Meter Project and began installing smart meters in Texas and New Mexico. A comprehensive Customer Education Plan was created by consultant Black & Veatch\* in coordination with EPE to ensure customers are prepared for the transition. EPE hired communications firm Hahn to assist with the implementation of the Customer Education Plan.

\*Black & Veatch is a 100-percent employee-owned global engineering, procurement, consulting and construction company with a more than 100-year track record of innovation in sustainable infrastructure.

## Customer Education Goals

1. Demonstrate transparency and responsibility throughout the project.
2. Educate internal and external audiences about the benefits of smart meters.
3. Keep internal and external audiences informed about the process, progress and next steps.

## Strategy

Messages for the EPE Smart Meter Project are being sent internally and externally in three phases. In 2024, EPE continued the Deployment phase and began the Post-Deployment phase to encourage customers to create an online account and use EPE’s smart energy tools.

Phase	Goal
Pre-Deployment/Phase 1 2023	Raise consumer awareness about upcoming technology transformation and proactively address concerns around safety, security and cost.
Deployment/Phase 2 2023-2025	Help customers understand the installation process and general timeline.
Post-Deployment/Phase 3 2025-2026	Educate customers about EPE’s smart energy tools, announce project completion, and promote new programs and services.

# Optimization Areas

## OPTIMIZATION AREA SUMMARY

- 5 Optimization Areas for TX and 2 for NM
- Contiguous Zip Codes for each area
- Easily identifiable in CCS

*Optimization Area target is between 50,000 and 100,000 endpoints.*

OA1 - TX		OA2 - TX		OA3 - TX		OA4 - TX		OA5 - TX		OA6 - NM		OA7 - NM	
Zip Code	Count	Zip Code	Count	Zip Code	Count	Zip Code	Count	Zip Code	Count	Zip Code	Count	Zip Code	Count
79901	6,125	79821	2,840	79907	21,692	79935	8,476	79836	2,841	88005	18,101	87930	636
79902	11,286	79835	4,897	79910	2	79936	44,493	79838	3,886	88008	2,939	87931	1
79903	8,155	79911	4,000	79915	16,277	79937	3	79839	925	88011	19,604	87933	132
79904	13,064	79912	36,644	79925	19,933	79938	35,677	79849	5,135	88021	7,089	87936	261
79905	10,669	79932	13,204		<b>57,904</b>		<b>88,649</b>	79851	541	88024	857	87937	2,084
79906	287	79934	11,940					79853	1,243	88027	439	87940	190
79908	2		<b>73,525</b>					79855	1,523	88044	1,048	87941	427
79916	12							79927	16,912	88046	1,395	88001	22,657
79920	1							79928	31,482	88047	437	88002	1
79922	3,878								<b>64,488</b>	88048	1,257	88007	12,760
79924	25,895									88058	561	88012	15,540
79930	11,592									88063	6,464	88030	112
	<b>90,966</b>									88072	1,102	88032	1
										88081	6,656	88052	3
											<b>67,949</b>	88330	2
													<b>54,807</b>

\*Optimization areas are clusters of zip codes assigned by EPE to streamline the installation process. In 2024, EPE installed smart meters in optimization areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The *Next Steps* campaign ran in optimization areas 1, 2, 3, and 6.

## Customer Reach

In 2024, EPE's *The Installers* and *Next Steps* campaigns resulted in approximately 56.9 million impressions\* in Texas and New Mexico. Digital (online) impressions reached 8.7 million while traditional (billboard) impressions reached 48.2 million.

The overall goal of these campaigns was to reach 80% of the adult population across media tactics once per week in each optimization area. In 2024, EPE over-delivered targeted impressions by 285% across all optimization areas, primarily due to the addition of billboards across the region.

\*Impressions represent the number of times an ad was served on a media platform.

### Deployment/Phase 2 *The Installers* Campaign

*The Installers* campaign targets customers who are about to receive their meters. Ads are sent to customers one month prior to the start of installations in an optimization area and end when 98% of the meters in the area have been installed. Digital ads were served on Facebook, Instagram, and Connected TV, and were flighted to avoid ad fatigue. In addition, billboards were added in 2024 for increased visibility across the region.

In 2024, the campaign resulted in more than 36,000 customers using the ZIP code search functionality on the smart meter website.

EPE advertised *The Installers* campaign in optimization areas 2, 3, 4, 6, & 7, representing 68% of the total number of meters being installed (342,834 meters). Optimization areas 2, 3, and 4 are in Texas, and areas 6 and 7 are in New Mexico.

### The Installers Campaign Results

Texas	New Mexico
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.8 million digital impressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.77 million digital impressions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19,074 ad clicks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19,336 ad clicks</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 460,769 video ad views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50,221 video ad views</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24.79 million traditional impressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7.38 million traditional impressions</li> </ul>

Sample digital ad:



### Post-Deployment/Phase 3 Next Steps Campaign

The *Next Steps* campaign launched in April 2024 to target customers who recently received a new smart meter. Customers were encouraged to download the EPE mobile app, create an online account, and use EPE’s smart energy tools available in the customer portal. Customers who want to use the smart energy tools are required to create an online account first. The smart energy tools include a free online home energy analysis, bill comparisons, historical energy use, and customized energy saving tips. Customers who take control of their energy use can save money on their energy bills and help EPE manage its load growth.

As part of this campaign, EPE added a new *My Smart Meter* section to its smart meter website. This landing page includes an explainer video and highlights how to create an online customer account and use EPE’s smart energy tools.

During the Post-Deployment phase in 2024, EPE advertised in optimization areas 1, 2, 3, & 6, representing approximately 290,344 meters (approximately 58% of the total). Optimization areas 1, 2, and 3 are in Texas, and area 6 is in New Mexico.

## Next Steps Campaign Results

Texas	New Mexico
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.43 million digital impressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 677.4K digital impressions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17,343 ad clicks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4,317 ad clicks</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 72,410 video ad views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17,089 video ad views</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10.94 million traditional impressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5.06 million traditional impressions</li> </ul>

Sample digital ad:



## EPE Customer Portal

EPE serves approximately 460,000 customers from Van Horn, Texas to Hatch, New Mexico. As of the end of 2024, 55% of EPE customers have accessed the online customer portal. Customers can use the Smart Energy Tools in the portal to conduct a free home energy analysis, sign up for high bill alerts, receive customized energy saving tips, and view energy use comparisons.

### Customer Portal Users by Customer Type

Customer Type	Registered Portal Users
Residential	235,318
Small Business/Commercial	18,832
Large Commercial/Industrial	49
Other	1,922

\*The “Other” category refers to government and other municipal users.

### Customer Portal Users by Optimization Areas

Optimization Area	Portal Users	Number of Meters	Ratio of Portal Users to Meters
OA1-TX	41,149	93,132	44%
OA2-TX	43,833	78,270	56%
OA3-TX	25,996	58,836	44%
OA4-TX	50,612	93,824	54%
OA5-TX	38,085	74,045	51%
OA6-NM	32,051	71,936	45%
OA7-NM	26,045	58,172	45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>257,771</b>	<b>528,215</b>	<b>49%</b>

## Expense Report

The EPE Smart Meter Project Customer Education Plan budget is \$2 million. In 2024, EPE spent approximately \$580,000.

The budget is divided into two categories: production and media. Production reflects the time or labor spent to produce the marketing and advertising assets. It also includes project management, reporting, and campaign optimizations. Media reflects the advertising dollars spent to promote the project in traditional and digital media platforms.

2024 Budget	Phase 2 <i>The Installers</i> (January-August)	Phase 3 <i>Next Steps</i> (April-November)	2024 Totals
Production/Labor TX	\$90,322.74	\$135,484.11	\$225,806.85
Media TX	\$135,991.09	\$74,591.07	\$210,582.16
Production/Labor NM	\$30,099.77	\$45,149.65	\$75,249.42
Media NM	\$46,889.85	\$22,464.62	\$69,354.47
<b>Total</b>	-	-	<b>\$580,992.90</b>

## Other Marketing Tools in 2024

Tools	Details	Audience
Explainer Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educates customers on how to create an online customer account and use EPE's smart energy tools</li> <li>Launched on website in April 2024</li> <li>Shared on social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers who use the smart meter website and EPE's social channels</li> </ul>
Brochure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redesigned to educate customers about creating an online customer account and using EPE's smart energy tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers at community events</li> </ul>
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing social posts</li> <li>Created template for responding to smart meter inquiries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers who follow EPE's social channels</li> </ul>
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Added "My Smart Meter" section</li> <li>Updated ZIP code search tool to account for adjusted deployment schedule</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers who use the smart meter website and online search tool</li> </ul>
Customer e-newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared monthly updates w/customers in EPE's e-newsletter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers who have opted in to receive emails from EPE</li> </ul>
Research, Reporting & Optimizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produced quarterly campaign reporting and recommendations</li> <li>Deployed a one-question survey to test effectiveness of messages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPE communications and AMS teams (to optimize customer communication efforts)</li> </ul>



## Energy Savings

Overall, energy consumption in the EPE service area increased between 2023 and 2024 due to increased load growth. To calculate energy savings from the smart meters, EPE analyzed 1,291 customer accounts across all customer types, comparing energy use data between 2023 and 2024. Of those, 311 or 24% of the accounts experienced energy savings totaling more than 22 million kWh. Increased use of EPE’s smart energy tools and anticipated new pricing options for customers are expected to lead to additional energy savings over time.

### Energy Savings by Customer Class

Customer Type	Energy Savings in kWh
Large Commercial/Industrial	22,269,383
Residential	138,283
Small Business/Commercial	442,039
Other	239

## Phase 3 – Post-Deployment

Continue to educate customers about EPE’s smart energy tools and announce project completion.