

TEPCO to hold bids for 17 million smart meters: report

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Japan's Tokyo Electric Power plans to install about 17 million "smart meters" in customer households by March 2019 in a bid to increase efficiency, a report said Sunday.

TEPCO, the operator of the crippled Fukushima [nuclear plant](#), will solicit bids from Japanese and foreign companies, forgoing its usual practice of going through a group supplier, the Nikkei newspaper said.

The total investment is estimated to reach around 200 billion yen (\$2.6 billion), with the utility hoping to keep the price of the meter to about 10,000 yen per unit, the business daily said.

TEPCO plans to hold the first tender in autumn, for about three million [smart meters](#), the [Nikkei](#) said.

Smart meters monitor electricity use in real time and transmit consumption data to utilities.

In addition to doing away with the need for workers to visit customers to read their meters, smart meters can help cut power use during peak hours and make it easier for people to conserve energy.

The smart meter plan will be included in a restructuring scheme, to be finished in March, as the company rushes to contain the Fukushima [nuclear crisis](#), triggered by a massive earthquake and tsunami in March last year, and makes slow progresses toward paying damages to people

affected by the accident.

A government panel has estimated claims from victims affected by the Fukushima crisis could reach 4.5 trillion yen by 2013.

The restructuring plan could also call for an essential nationalisation of the company.

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