

# Smart Home Flex

## Frequently Asked Questions

### General Questions

#### What is Smart Home Flex?

Smart Home Flex by San Diego Community Power is a pilot program that allows Community Power to adjust the settings of your enrolled smart device(s), like thermostats or connected water heaters, to reduce energy use during times of the day when energy is in high demand and electricity costs are higher.

These adjustments reduce strain on the energy grid and can help lower your energy bill while keeping your home comfortable and supplied with hot water.

#### How does Smart Home Flex work for smart thermostats?

By enrolling an eligible smart thermostat, you allow Community Power to temporarily adjust its temperature settings during a Smart Flex Event, when electricity demand is high.

During these events, your thermostat receives a signal to reduce the use of your air-conditioning system when energy is most expensive. To help maintain comfort, Community Power may signal your thermostat to pre-cool your home up to one hour before the event begins.

You are always in control and may override your thermostat at any time. Please note that frequent overrides may affect eligibility for participation incentives.

#### How does Smart Home Flex work for water heaters?

Throughout the year, your enrolled eligible water heater receives signals to heat water above its standard temperature. This process is called superheating or advance load up and typically occurs at 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. to avoid peak hours.

Superheating shifts energy use to times when electricity demand is lower and more affordable, while ensuring you continue to have hot water available when needed.

#### How do I enroll in Smart Home Flex?

- **Connected water heaters:** Enrollment is currently open for eligible water heaters. You can apply using the [water heater enrollment form](#).
- **Smart thermostats:** Enrollment in the Smart Home Flex pilot was limited to the first 2,000 approved devices and is currently closed.

Enrollment availability and eligibility are subject to change.

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### Can I unenroll from Smart Home Flex?

You can unenroll from Smart Home Flex at any time by contacting Community Power and requesting to be unenrolled. Unenrolling from the program forfeits all ongoing incentives.

### Can I enroll multiple devices?

Yes, you can enroll multiple devices and each is eligible for its own enrollment incentive.

### I think I'm already enrolled in a similar program. How is Smart Home Flex different?

Several programs encourage customers to temporarily adjust or reduce electricity use during times of high demand. Smart Home Flex is one of these programs, but it has specific eligibility criteria depending on the type of device you want to enroll.

**For smart thermostats:** If your smart thermostat is currently enrolled in another demand response program, it must be enrolled before participating in Smart Home Flex. Smart thermostats cannot be enrolled in more than one demand response program at the same time. Contact your current program provider to unenroll before signing up.

**For heat pump water heaters:** Smart Home Flex works differently and is coordinated with the TECH Clean California statewide initiative.

TECH Clean California requires enrollment in both a demand response program and a water heater rewards program. In Community Power service territory:

- OhmConnect is currently the approved residential demand response program
- Smart Home Flex is currently the approved water heater rewards program

If you are participating in TECH Clean California, you must enroll in OhmConnect for demand response and Smart Home Flex for the water heater rewards program.

Please note: Do not connect your water heater to OhmConnect. Doing so will make your water heater ineligible for Smart Home Flex enrollment.

### Who do I contact if I have additional questions?

Contact Community Power by emailing us at [SmartHomeFlex@SDCommunityPower.org](mailto:SmartHomeFlex@SDCommunityPower.org) or calling our Contact Center at 888-382-0169 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

## Incentive Questions

### What incentives are available and how are they earned?

Community Power offers incentives for approved smart thermostats and connected heat pump water heaters that remain enrolled and participate.



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### Smart Thermostats

- **Enrollment incentive:** \$50 per approved smart thermostat, issued after successful enrollment.
- **Participation incentive:** Up to \$25 per thermostat each year for continued participation in Smart Flex Events. Participation incentives are typically issued once per year.

### Connected Water Heaters

- **Enrollment incentive:** \$50 per approved connected water heater, issued after successful enrollment.
- **Participation incentive:** \$5 per month, up to \$60 per year, for continued participation. Participation incentives are issued twice per year, typically in June and November.

If you unenroll from Smart Home Flex, you will no longer be eligible for ongoing participation incentives.

Please note: For connected water heaters that require a Universal Communication Module (UCM), incentives are issued only after Community Power confirms the UCM is installed and successfully connected.

### How are incentives received?

Enrollment and participation incentives are sent as paper checks mailed to the address provided during enrollment.

### When will I receive the enrollment incentive and participation incentive?

Enrollment incentives will be mailed once Community Power has approved your enrollment application. It may take up to 10 business days to process an application.

Participation incentives will be mailed in December for smart thermostats. Connected water heater participation incentives will be mailed in June and November. It may take up to 20 business days to process and send participation incentives.

Please allow for up to two weeks for mail delivery of the checks.

## Smart Flex Event Questions

### What are Smart Flex Events?

Smart Flex Events occur when high energy use is expected to put a strain on energy resources and increase electricity costs, or when a grid emergency is called by state officials to reduce energy usage. A signal is sent to your smart device(s) to temporarily adjust their settings to help prevent your system from turning on and using energy.



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### Can I opt out of a Smart Flex Event?

Yes, you can opt out of a Smart Flex Event at any time. Since Smart Flex Events are called when electricity demand and costs are high, we encourage you not to opt out unless it's for comfort, safety, or urgent reasons. Opting out too many times in the season may jeopardize your participation incentive.

### What if my home becomes uncomfortable during a Smart Flex Event?

To help ensure that you are as comfortable as possible during a Smart Flex Event, we may send a signal to the thermostat to pre-cool or pre-heat your home to help maintain a comfortable temperature.

You are always in control of your comfort and can override the automatic adjustments at any time. Adjusting the temperature during a Smart Flex Event will automatically opt you out of the Event.

## Universal Communication Module (UCM) Questions

### What is a Universal Communication Module?

A Universal Communication Module (UCM) is a small device that plugs into your water heater's CTA-2045/EcoPort™ and connects to the internet via cellular service to receive signals from Community Power.

### Why do I need a Universal Communication Module?

The UCM allows your water heater to receive signals from Community Power so it can participate in Smart Home Flex.

While some water heaters have built-in Wi-Fi capabilities, not all models are able to receive signals from Community Power. In those cases, a UCM is required to securely connect and participate in the program.

### How do I get a Universal Communication Module?

After you submit your enrollment application, Community Power will review your information and determine if a UCM is needed for your water heater. If required, a UCM will be shipped to you at no cost.

Generally, most heat pump water heaters that are not manufactured by Rheem will require a UCM to participate in Smart Home Flex. Please note that GE water heaters are not supported at this time.

If you have a Rheem heat pump water heater but are unable to connect it to Wi-Fi, a UCM can be provided at no cost. Please indicate the need for a UCM in your enrollment form.

### How do I install a Universal Communication Module?

Community Power has developed a series of abridged step-by-step UCM installation guides for the most common brands of water heaters. To view the full guides, please visit [WaterSaver](#) and download the connection guide for your specific water heater.



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These guides will be included with the UCM shipment. You can find digital versions below:

- [A.O. Smith, American, Reliance, State, Lochinvar, and U.S. Craftmaster](#)
- [Ariston and American Standard](#)
- [LG](#)
- [Rheem, Ruud and Richmond](#)

Your UCM must be installed and connected in order for your water heater to participate in the program and to receive your enrollment and participation incentives.

Please note: If your UCM is not installed within 30 days of receiving it, your Smart Home Flex enrollment will be withdrawn and you will forfeit all incentives. You may be asked to return the UCM to Community Power.

### **Who do I contact if I need assistance installing a Universal Communication Module?**

If you need assistance installing your UCM or have any questions, please contact us at [SmartHomeFlex@SDCommunityPower.org](mailto:SmartHomeFlex@SDCommunityPower.org) to schedule a support call.

Your contractor may also help install the UCM.

### **How do I return a Universal Communication Module?**

If you are asked to return your UCM, Community Power will email you a prepaid return shipping label from [SmartHomeFlex@sdcommunitypower.org](mailto:SmartHomeFlex@sdcommunitypower.org).

## **Eligibility Questions**

### **What smart thermostats are eligible to enroll in Smart Home Flex?**

A current list of eligible smart thermostats is available on the Smart Home Flex webpage at [SDCommunityPower.org/Smart-Home-Flex](http://SDCommunityPower.org/Smart-Home-Flex).

### **I have an air conditioning system and a natural gas furnace for heating. Can I still enroll and participate?**

Yes, customers may still enroll and participate in the Smart Home Flex. The smart thermostat will be controlled primarily during the summer months when the air conditioning system is functioning.

### **What connected water heaters are eligible to enroll in Smart Home Flex?**

Connected heat pump water heater(s) must be an eligible model installed as part of the [TECH Clean CA heat pump water heater program](#) and must be connected to the internet via Wi-Fi or UCM (CTA-2045 [EcoPort™] compatible).

A current list of eligible water heaters under the TECH program is available through [TECH's contractor support resources](#).

Please note: GE water heaters are not able to participate in Smart Home Flex at this time.



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### **What's a thermostatic mixing valve and why is it required for water heaters?**

A thermostatic mixing valve (TMV) mixes cold water with superheated hot water to ensure the water temperature at your faucet is at a safe temperature for you and your family.

TECH requires TMVs on all water heater installations. Some water heaters may have the TMVs built in. For more information, contact your contractor.

