

Virtual Peaker Partners with SMECO and ICF to Launch Maryland's Innovative FlexHome Pilot Program

LOUISVILLE, KY, UNITED STATES, August 14, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Virtual Peaker](#), a leading virtual power plant software company, has partnered with [Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative](#) (SMECO) and [ICF](#) (NASDAQ: ICFI), a global consulting and technology services provider, to launch the FlexHome Pilot, a demand response program for residential members in southern Maryland. This voluntary program is the first in the state to go beyond traditional thermostat-based demand response by leveraging Wi-Fi-connected water heaters to optimize energy usage.



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The FlexHome Pilot is designed to reduce energy consumption during peak demand by adjusting water heater usage on weekdays for short periods, typically lasting just a few hours. By doing so, SMECO aims to lower reliance on more expensive and environmentally taxing power sources, helping keep energy costs low for all members while reducing the grids carbon footprint.

Participant Incentives

Residential participants in the program will receive significant financial benefits, including up to \$96 in annual bill credits and a one-time enrollment payment of up to \$800 if purchasing a new heat pump water heater compatible with pilot participation.

"SMECO is proud to lead the way in Maryland by introducing this innovative flexible load management program," said Jennifer Raley, Energy & Technology Programs Manager, Demand Side Management. "The FlexHome Pilot is focused on advancing SMECO's demand-side management capabilities by testing the coordination and participation of multiple grid-connected devices in residential homes—such as water heaters, in addition to thermostats and electric vehicles. This specific initiative also focuses on integrating smart technologies to lower energy use during times of peak energy demand, which can reduce the use of more expensive power sources. That's good for the environment, and it helps keep energy costs low for

everyone.”

Virtual Peaker’s virtual power plant software for the grid-edge powers the FlexHome Pilot, enabling SMECO to seamlessly enroll and manage the load-shedding capabilities of up to 500 grid-enabled water heaters over the span of the three-year pilot. Utilizing Virtual Peaker’s cutting-edge platform, SMECO can monitor and measure energy reduction performance while improving grid reliability and resilience.

“SMECO’s FlexHome Pilot is a milestone program that illustrates how technology can transform energy management into a powerful peak management asset for utilities and their customers,” said Dr. William Burke, Founder and CEO of Virtual Peaker. “This collaboration with SMECO and ICF is a testament to the power of partnerships in creating scalable solutions that support decarbonization and grid modernization while benefiting residential members directly. We’re thrilled to be part of this pioneering initiative.”

"Since the launch of the SMECO FlexHome Pilot in September 2024 through the end of May 2025, 70 events have been called. These adjustments typically last only a few hours, with little to no impact to members’ comfort. The pilot runs through the end of 2026, and SMECO is excited to share a full report detailing findings at the pilot’s conclusion," said Katherine Jackson, Manager, Flexible Load Management at ICF.

To learn more about Virtual Peaker’s virtual power plant software for the grid-edge, visit virtual-peaker.com/platform.

About SMECO

Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO) was incorporated in 1937 and is one of the 15 largest electric cooperatives in the United States with more than 178,000 member services in Charles County, St. Mary’s County, southern Prince George’s County, and most of Calvert County. SMECO is committed to delivering reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy solutions.

About ICF

ICF is a global consulting and technology services company with approximately 9,000 employees, but we are not your typical consultants. At ICF, business analysts and policy specialists work together with digital strategists, data scientists and creatives. We combine unmatched industry expertise with cutting-edge engagement capabilities to help organizations solve their most complex challenges. Since 1969, public and private sector clients have worked with ICF to navigate change and shape the future. Learn more at icf.com.

About Virtual Peaker

Virtual Peaker is a leading virtual power plant software company that empowers utilities to build the grid of the future and meet global decarbonization goals. Through its cutting-edge software-as-a-service (SaaS) platform, the company seamlessly integrates distributed energy resource management system (DERMS) components, customer engagement, and load forecasting. Virtual

Peaker's groundbreaking technology, Topline Demand Control, paves the way for the next generation of virtual power plant capabilities. To learn more, please visit www.virtual-peaker.com or connect on LinkedIn and X via (@VirtualPeaker).

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