

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DETECTING AND REPORTING A POWER OUTAGE

5 FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates in general to the field of utility meters. More particularly, the present invention relates to automatic equipment and systems used for remote reading of utility meters, such as electric, gas, or water meters, via telephone lines and modems. Even more particularly, the present invention relates to a method and
10 apparatus for detecting a power outage to a meter and its modem, and reporting the outage to a central office.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The recent deregulation of the utility industry has created a market for products that facilitate the efficient distribution and monitoring of electrical power. In the
15 past, utilities have built systems that worked in a coordinated but independent fashion, and did not provide easy access to certain information necessary to adequately monitor and control a substation, or multiple substations, and related feeder networks and the like from a central location. (Electrical distribution substations and the equipment used therein, such as transformers, circuit breakers, disconnect switches, etc., are well known. See, e.g.,
20 U.S. Patent No. 5,648,888, July 15, 1997, titled "Power Distribution Substation," for

