CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A wide area network (WAN) module, comprising:

at least two radios, each radio configured to wirelessly transmit information;

a power supply;

an electronically controllable switch coupled to the power supply, said switch configured to selectively direct operating power from said power supply to only one of said at least two radios at any one time;

a controller, coupled to the switch, said controller configured to selectively operate said switch; and

a universal serial bus (USB) interface coupled to said controller, whereby external commands may be sent to said controller by way of said USB interface so as to selectively control said switch.

2. A module as in claim 1, wherein said switch is manually operable.

3. A module as in claim 1, further comprising a broadband antenna, coupled to an output of each of said at least two radios.

4. A module as in claim 3, further comprising a second antenna, selectively coupled to an output of each of said at least two radios.

5. A module as in claim 1, wherein said at least two radios are configured to wirelessly transmit information using different frequency bands.

6. A module as in claim 1, wherein said at least two radios are configured to wirelessly transmit information using different modulation technologies.

7. A module as in claim 1, wherein said at least two radios are identical, a first of said at least two radios is configured as a primary radio, and a second of said at least two radios is configured as a failover radio.

8. A module as in claim 1, further comprising more than two of said radios, with each radio configured to wirelessly transmit information, and with said switch configured to direct operating power from said power supply to a selected one of said more than two radios, whereby only one of said more than two radios may receive operating power at any one time.

9. A utility consumption measuring device, comprising:

a utility consumption measuring component; and

a wide area network (WAN) module including at least two radios, a power supply, and an electronically controllable switch;

a controller coupled to the switch, said controller configured to selectively operate said switch;

a universal serial bus (USB) interface coupled to said controller,

wherein said switch is configured to selectively direct operating power from said power supply to only one of said at least two radios at any one time, and

said utility consumption measuring component is configured to transmit consumption information to said controller for transmission by one of said at least two radios, and

whereby external commands may be sent to said controller by way of said USB interface to control said switch.

10. A device as in claim 9, wherein said switch is manually operable.

11. A system for transmitting utility consumption information to a central office, comprising:

a plurality of utility consumption measuring devices, each utility consumption measuring device including a utility consumption measuring component and a wide area network (WAN) module; and

a processor and a universal serial bus (USB) interface in selected of said WAN modules,

wherein said WAN module in selected of said plurality of utility consumption measuring devices includes at least two radios, an associated power supply, and an associated switch,

said switches are configured to direct operating power from said respectively associated power supply to only one of said at least two radios at any one time, and

said processor is configured to receive signals from said USB interface and to control an associated switch of an associated WAN module based on said signals from said USB interface.

12. A system as in claim 11, wherein selected of said switches are manually operable.

13. A method in a utility consumption measuring device, comprising:

measuring utility consumption data;

controlling an electronically controllable switch via Universal Serial Bus (USB) interface by a controller of the utility consumption measuring device to selectively direct operating power from a power supply of said utility consumption measuring device to a selected one of at least two radios of a wide area network module of said utility consumption measuring device, such that the switch supplies operating power to only one of said at least two radios at any one time; and

transmitting utility consumption information to a central office via the selected one of the at least two radios.

14. The method of claim 13, further comprising receiving commands from a source external to the utility consumption measuring device, wherein the controlling of the switch is performed based at least in part on the commands received from the source external to the utility consumption measuring device.

15. The method of claim 13, further comprising receiving commands via a manual interface, wherein the controlling of the switch is performed based at least in part on the commands received from the manual interface.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein transmitting utility consumption information to a central office via the selected one of the at least two radios comprises:

selecting a frequency band and/or modulation to use to transmit the utility consumption information to the central office; and

wirelessly transmitting information the utility consumption information to the central office using the selected frequency band and/or modulation.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A wide area network (WAN) module, comprising:

at least two radios, each radio configured to wirelessly transmit information;

a power supply; and

a switch, said switch configured to direct operating power from said power supply to a selected one of said at least two radios,

whereby only one of said at least two radios may receive operating power at any one time.

2. A module as in claim 1, further comprising:

a controller; and

wherein said switch comprises an electronically controllable switch; and

said controller is configured to selectively operate said switch.

3. A module as in claim 2, further comprising:

a universal serial bus (USB) interface coupled to said controller,

whereby external commands may be sent to said controller by way of said USB interface so as to selectively control said switch.

4. A module as in claim 1, wherein said switch is manually operable.

5. A module as in claim 1, further comprising a broadband antenna, coupled to an output of each of said at least two radios.

6. A module as in claim 5, further comprising a second antenna, selectively coupled to an output of each of said at least two radios.

7. A module as in claim 1, wherein said at least two radios are configured to wirelessly transmit information using different frequency bands.

8. A module as in claim 1, wherein said at least two radios are configured to wirelessly transmit information using different modulation technologies.

9. A module as in claim 1, wherein said at least two radios are identical, a first of said at least two radios is configured as a primary radio, and a second of said at least two radios is configured as a failover radio.

10. A module as in claim 1, further comprising more than two of said radios, with each radio configured to wirelessly transmit information, and with said switch configured to direct operating power from said power supply to a selected one of said more than two radios,

whereby only one of said more than two radios may receive operating power at any one time.

11. A utility consumption measuring device, comprising:

a utility consumption measuring component; and

a wide area network (WAN) module including at least two radios, a power supply, and a switch;

wherein said switch is configured to direct operating power from said power supply to a selected one of said at least two radios,

whereby only one of said at least two radios may receive operating power at any one time.

12. A device as in claim 11, further comprising:

a controller; and

wherein said switch comprises an electronically controllable switch;

said controller is configured to selectively operate said switch; and

said utility consumption measuring component is configured to transmit consumption information to said controller for transmission by one of said at least two radios.

13. A device as in claim 12, further comprising:

a universal serial bus (USB) interface coupled to said controller,

whereby external commands may be sent to said controller by way of said USB interface to control said switch.

14. A device as in claim 11, wherein said switch is manually operable.

15. A system for transmitting utility consumption information to a central office, comprising:

a plurality of utility consumption measuring devices, each utility consumption measuring device including a utility consumption measuring component and a wide area network (WAN) module,

wherein said WAN module in selected of said plurality of utility consumption measuring devices includes at least two radios, an associated power supply, and an associated switch, and

wherein said switches are configured to direct operating power from said respectively associated power supply to a selected one of said at least two radios,

whereby only one of said at least two radios for a particular WAN module may receive operating power at any one time.

16. A system as in claim 15, further comprising:

a processor and a universal serial bus (USB) interface in selected of said WAN modules,

wherein said processor is configured to received signals from said USB interface and to control an associated switch of an associated WAN module based on said signals from said USB interface.

17. A system as in claim 15, wherein selected of said switches are manually operable.

18. A method comprising:

under control of a utility consumption measuring device:

measuring utility consumption data;

controlling a switch to direct operating power from a power supply of said utility consumption measuring device to a selected one of at least two radios of a wide area network module of said utility consumption measuring device, such that the switch supplies operating power to only one of said at least two radios at any one time; and

transmitting utility consumption information to a central office via the selected one of the at least two radios.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein said switch comprises an electronically controllable switch, and wherein controlling the switch is performed by a controller of the utility consumption measuring device.

20. The method of claim 18, further comprising receiving commands from a source external to the utility consumption measuring device, wherein the controlling of the switch is performed based at least in part on the commands received from the source external to the utility consumption measuring device.

21. The method of claim 18, further comprising receiving commands via a manual interface, wherein the controlling of the switch is performed based at least in part on the commands received from the manual interface.

22. The method of claim 18, wherein transmitting utility consumption information to a central office via the selected one of the at least two radios comprises:

selecting a frequency band and/or modulation to use to transmit the utility consumption information to the central office; and

wirelessly transmitting information the utility consumption information to the central office using the selected frequency band and/or modulation.