

Apple's smart home app can now tell you when you're using clean energy

Apple's iPhone 15 launch event had a big focus on the company's move toward carbon neutrality, but it also introduced a new smart home feature that can help you leave a lighter footprint on the planet.

Arriving with iOS 17, Grid Forecast is a new tool in the Apple Home app that shows you when your electrical grid has relatively clean or less clean energy sources available. This could help you decide when to run your tumble dryer or charge your EV to take advantage of "cleaner" energy when you have higher consumption.

Grid Forecast is available in the Home app on iPhone, iPad, Mac, and Apple Watch devices running this fall's soon-to-be-released updates, with iOS 17 set for a public launch on September 18th. It is also available as an iOS widget or a watch face complication and will work in the contiguous United States.

Using cleaner energy – energy that's generated by wind or solar or electricity produced using lower emissions – can reduce the impact you have on the climate when you use electricity in your home.

While Apple's first implementation of this feature is entirely manual – you need to look at the Home app to see when the energy is cleaner and then decide if you want to charge your EV – it's feasible it could be tied into automation if and when Apple supports energy management features natively in its

smart home platform.

Apple already has a clean energy charging feature it introduced with iOS 16.1 that aims to charge your phone when cleaner energy is available. Automating smart home devices to do the same should be a natural next step. Even Microsoft can schedule your Windows Update for a time when more green energy is available.

The smart home is in a unique position to help automate this type of energy management, and other smart home platforms have enabled similar features. For example, Samsung's SmartThings Energy is a service that lets you view real-time energy usage from your connected appliances and provides tips on ways to reduce energy use.

Apple says Grid Forecast uses data that combines grid, emissions, and weather information to show you in a simple graphic when energy is clean or less clean. It's a good start for home energy management, but adding the ability to automate how and when your home uses this clean energy is essential to make this more than just another data point.

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