

Camden Pairs Itron Meters, Automated Meter Reading for Impressive Results

City gains efficiency and additional revenues

background

Background

The City of Camden Municipal Utilities, located in the Midlands of South Carolina, serves 27 square miles of territory with 10,000 electric end points and 6,000 water end points. It is about 40% complete on an Itron AMR mobile system for their electric end points that started with handhelds and is now being moved to the drive-by system.

In late 2001, the utility recognized that it needed to start a changeout program because their electric and water meters had exceeded their life expectancy, as evidenced in maintenance problems and lost revenue. “Since we knew that this would be a large investment for the City of Camden, we decided to make it worthwhile by going with the latest technology to enable us to move forward,” states Debra Courtney, Financial Officer.

“We also knew that the technology we needed for our area was a radio frequency (RF) solution,” continues Courtney.

Some of the factors driving that initiative were

- > safety of meter readers
- > metering tampering
- > other revenue loss issues
- > hard-to-read meters

solution

The RF Solution

“Knowing that we wanted an RF solution, we began our research,” adds Gene Hastings, Meter Safety Coordinator. “First, we looked at five vendors with RF technology to see what they had to offer. At the same time, we collected a list of references from each vendor and began checking them out. Invariably, with each reference we called, the Itron technology was recommended over other systems,” said Hastings.

Based on these recommendations from Itron customers, the City of Camden decided to go with the Itron RF technology. Their next step was to research meter vendors to find an electronic meter that would work with the Itron system. The Itron CENTRON® and SENTINEL® meters offered high accuracy as well as ERT® compatibility.

“The next challenge was to convince the City of Camden to accept our recommendation,” said Courtney. “We were approved for a pilot program, so we ordered 600 CENTRON meters along with the handhelds. These proved to do exactly what we were told they would do, so the Council had no problem giving us permission to continue. By years end we had 3,000 installed,” continues Courtney.

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*– Debra Courtney,
Financial Officer*



results

Results

The City of Camden has realized tremendous savings with this new system. Courtney gives the credit to the CENTRON R300. The utility has recognized the following benefits:

- > accuracy
- > low starting watts
- > reliability
- > no re-reads
- > meter tampering alerts

“We put five of these meters alongside five new electromechanical meters. After one month, the CENTRON R300 meters proved their ability to measure energy usage not measured by the electromechanical meters. This accuracy showed two kilowatt hours more than the electromechanical meters. That does not sound like much of a difference, but when it is multiplied by 10,000 end points, it adds up,” said Hastings.

Hastings added, “The meter readers are happy with the new system. They are able to better schedule their reads because they can do them in half the time. That leaves them time to do maintenance and customer service in a more efficient manner. The customer feedback has been very positive as well.”

The new system has worked so well on the electricity side that Camden is making plans to implement the same Itron system on their water end points. Currently, they are evaluating water meter vendors to select one that will work well with the Itron system.

future

Future Plans

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“We want to thank Jim Woods from Shealy Electric Distributors in Columbia for his help as the Itron Sales Representative. Also, Bo Myers and the other Oconee folks have been very supportive in getting this project moving. Each time I have called, I have been well pleased with the results,” concludes Courtney.

Jim Woods salutes both Debra Courtney and Gene Hastings. Both of these individuals pursued research to ensure the City of Camden that their recommendation was the best for the city. They are moving the city forward into the more efficient method of operating to provide even greater benefits to its citizens.

Contributors for this story are Debra Courtney, City of Camden Financial Officer and Gene Hastings, Meter Safety Coordinator, and Jim Woods from Shealy Electric Distributors.

Itron

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