

When Waterworks District 3 of Beauregard Parish, La., began to research new water meters to replace its aging system, it didn't take long to decide that the Beacon advanced metering analytics (AMA) managed solution was the right fit. As the first Beacon AMA starter kit sold by distributor Rural Pipe & Supply, District 3 started its deployment before the four-month trial was over. "As soon as I learned about Beacon AMA, I let District 3 know, and they were on board right from our first conversation," said Todd Stott, sales representative for Rural Pipe & Supply. "Even though they are only partially deployed, they've seen the benefits and have convinced other utilities to sign up for the starter kits as well."

aging meters with decreasing accuracy. This was another area desperately needing improvement. After considering various meter products, District 3 selected the high-resolution E-Series Ultrasonic engineered polymer meter line for its durability and long-term accuracy.

The meters use solid-state technology in a compact, totally encapsulated, weatherproof, ultraviolet-resistant housing. Equipped with an easy-to-read nine-digit LCD, the meters present consumption, rate of flow, reverse-flow indication and alarms. With no moving parts, the meters also improve reliability and have greater extended low flow accuracy compared to other positive displacement meters.

Accuracy Pays

With new, more accurate meters beginning to operate, District 3 already is capturing more revenue. "The E-Series meters are catching the lowest flow amounts we've ever been able to record," Joffrion said.

Along with capturing more revenue, District 3 appreciates the ability to gather and analyze more granular measurement data. "It helps me generate better reports," Joffrion said. "The numbers are much more accurate than they have been in the past and will continue to get better as we install more."

With their long-term, sustained accuracy, the meters also will help the district record flows at new meter accuracies throughout the life of the meter. Overall, Joffrion estimates that with the labor efficiencies and added revenue from more accurate metering, the system will pay for itself quickly.

Improved Customer Service

Beacon AMA offers an interface that is easy to use for both District 3 and its current customers. By utilizing the Beacon AMA software suite, the utility can easily access and manage exact, near-real-time data. This gives the utility a troubleshooting tool for any customer complaints or maintenance issues that may arise. Because the utility has access to accurate data that are collected continuously, it can easily point to specific occurrences on a customer's utility bill to help decipher where and how a discrepancy might have occurred. Customers then can work with the utility to fix any leaks or determine when their water use may have exceeded their expectations.

District 3 also has come to rely on the notes section in the software for each account. After a conversation with a customer, the utility representative will go into the account and record the conversation so he or she knows moving forward what was said, how a problem was addressed and what next steps should be taken to resolve the issue. This has proved to be helpful, especially with billing discrepancies and when multiple staff are involved.

In addition, the EyeOnWater smartphone app, included as part of the software suite, is being downloaded by the district's customers. "This app is growing in popularity because it allows our customers to see the amount of water they are using and when they are using it—especially when they are away from home," Joffrion said.

Future Deployment

Moving forward into a wider implementation, the utility will deploy 100 Badger Meter Orion Cellular endpoints per month, with a goal of 1,000 in 2015 and every year after. It also will continue to replace aging meters with E-Series Ultrasonic meters. **w&wd**

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A Winning Combination



By Kristie Anderson

Analytics technology improves data efficiency in Louisiana parish

Beauregard Parish, which covers 1,200 sq miles, is mainly rural, with most of its 7,000 customers spread apart, creating hard-to-reach meters. Although the aging system was working, there were many inefficiencies, including the need to hire a third party to manually read meters. "We knew immediately that the Beacon AMA software suite, the Orion Cellular endpoints and the E-Series Ultrasonic meters would help save time and money," said Jeremy Joffrion, distribution manager for District 3.

Overdue Efficiencies

Long driveways, wooded areas, dogs, hidden meters and often multiple meters per property were all barriers to an easy meter read. On average, it took three people more than 12 days to collect information in the parish. Realizing that it needed to enter the electronic age, the district knew that the time and money it spent to obtain meter readings could instead be used to increase efficiency. Enter Beacon AMA: a solution that combined cellular endpoints, use of existing cellular networks and an easy-to-use software product to give the utility fast, near-real-time data to help it save time and money. Now, instead of paying for manual meter readings, which averaged \$2 per meter, the utility is able to focus on its core competency.

In addition to the time it took to read the meters, the utility also knew it was obtaining readings from