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Nicor Gas Modernizes System to Cultivate Advanced Data Capabilities with Sensus Technology

Illinois's largest natural gas distribution company deploys smart utility network to streamline operations

RALEIGH, NC (July 16, 2020) – [Nicor Gas's](#) history dates back to the 1850s since planting roots in the abundant farmlands of northern Illinois. Today, the utility has grown into the largest natural gas distribution company in the state.

“We’re committed to delivering clean, safe, reliable and affordable natural gas for our customers, our neighbors and our communities,” said Sandy Garcia, director of special projects at Nicor Gas. “Investing in new programs and technologies across the Nicor Gas system is a key step toward building a state-of-the-art natural gas delivery system for northern Illinois.”

Nicor Gas’s Meter Modernization program began in 2018, and deployment of the advanced metering infrastructure from [Sensus](#), a Xylem brand, to all 2.2 million customers is expected to be complete this year.

As part of an aggressive, three-year deployment, Nicor Gas began installing the two-way Sensus [FlexNet® communication network](#) across its service area to lay the groundwork for advanced metering infrastructure. The deployment includes FlexNet communication modules that communicate data to and from current residential and commercial natural gas meters. Nicor Gas continued its fast-paced module deployment with the [FlexNet EasyLink™ Mobile Communications solution](#), which allows technicians to automate data collection by obtaining meter reads using a portable, long-range radio device.

As the company quickly reached a one million installation milestone last year, the natural gas utility began to make fundamental changes to billing processes.

“We transitioned from billing customers with estimated reads to actual reads from real-time data,” said Gretchen Ohl, manager of advanced metering infrastructure deployment for Nicor Gas. “It was like going from the Stone Age to the Modern Age.”

As the utility nears a full deployment of the FlexNet communication modules later this year, the Nicor Gas team sees the power of enhanced data collection extend beyond billing.

“The automation will enhance our customer experience by helping to eliminate estimated meter reads and providing more timely and accurate data about their energy usage,” Garcia said. “The resulting analytics gives customers more control, enabling better informed energy- and cost-savings decisions.”

The new system has also helped the utility grow in its own efforts to become more energy efficient and sustainable.

“We are committed to pursuing an environmentally sustainable future for our customers and communities,” Ohl said. “The ability to read meters remotely helps us simplify the process for customers moving to new properties and it also reduces our carbon footprint with far less service vehicles on the road.”

Best of all, the new system was deployed without interruption of day-to-day natural gas service for most customers with outdoor-accessible meters. Read the full [case study](#) about Nicor Gas’s aggressive three-year deployment and how the system is benefitting its customers.

About Sensus

Sensus helps a wide range of public service providers—from utilities to cities to industrial complexes and campuses—do more with their infrastructure to improve quality of life in their communities. We enable our customers to reach farther through the application of technology and data-driven insights that deliver efficiency and responsiveness. We partner with them to anticipate and respond to evolving business needs with innovation in sensing and communications technologies, data analytics and services. Learn more at sensus.com and follow @SensusGlobal on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

About Xylem

Xylem (XYL) is a leading global water technology company committed to solving critical water and infrastructure challenges with technological innovation. Our more than 16,000 diverse employees delivered revenue of \$5.25 billion in 2019. We are creating a more sustainable world

by enabling our customers to optimize water and resource management, and helping communities in more than 150 countries become water-secure. Join us at www.xylem.com

About Nicor Gas

Nicor Gas is one of four natural gas distribution companies of Southern Company Gas, a wholly owned subsidiary of Southern Company (NYSE: SO). Nicor Gas serves more than 2.2 million customers in a service territory that encompasses most of the northern third of Illinois, excluding the city of Chicago. For more information, visit www.nicorgas.com.