



Sensus Technology Helps California Utility Improve Efficiency Through the Pandemic and Beyond

EASTERN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT USES SMART UTILITY NETWORK TO ADVANCE SERVICE AND SUSTAINABILITY



CHALLENGE

Create operational efficiency to manage demands

SOLUTION

Upgrade infrastructure to improve customer service and enhance leak detection

REACH FARTHER

Align customers with mission to advance sustainability

Cyclical water shortages are a challenge that [Eastern Municipal Water District \(EMWD\)](#) takes seriously. As California's sixth-largest retail water agency, they embrace the opportunity to balance water use efficiency with meeting the needs of a diverse and growing customer base.

Located in western Riverside County, California, EMWD provides water and wastewater services to nearly one million residents across a 555-square mile area. At just 38-percent capacity based on local land use plans, EMWD anticipates significant population growth in the coming decades and must balance their current demands with those of the future. To support this evolution, the utility is leveraging the smart technology that has supported them through the [transition from manual meter reads to a smart utility network](#).



“Our ability to keep finding these scenarios that are mutually beneficial for both our customers and EMWD is only possible with our Sensus smart utility network.”

DAVID GAYNEAUX, *Meter Services Manager, Eastern Municipal Water District*

“Our board has shown unwavering support for our smart meter program and its success would not have been possible without their commitment to creating a more efficient model that provides direct benefits to our customers,” said EMWD’s Meter Services Manager David Gayneaux. “Because of the resources our board has provided, we have been able to provide our customers reliable, accurate water use information in an economically sustainable manner.”

A customer-first approach

The water provider’s metering infrastructure has always gone hand-in-hand with customer service. It was a natural decision to invest in a smart utility network to streamline efficiency, promote sustainability and improve customer service across their coverage area.

“We wanted a system that would give us operational advantages and more,” said Gayneaux. “That meant a solution to help us provide new capabilities and enhance existing services so customers could see the benefits.”

EMWD deployed the two-way [Sensus FlexNet® communication network](#) as part of a meter replacement program to enable remote monitoring and management.

The utility now manages more than 158,000 meters, including [iPERL®](#) residential and [OMNI™](#) commercial meters. In just a short time, they’ve improved their leak detection capabilities and enhanced daily interactions with customers.

“We’ve used our network to proactively help more than 54,000 customers address issues with continuous usage,” said Gayneaux. “In addition, hourly usage data, available through EMWD’s ‘My Account’ customer portal, provides customers with the ability to self-serve and monitor their own water use. This also helps us answer day-to-day billing questions and provides customers with insights to understand their water consumption.”

Responding to the pandemic

EMWD is streamlining operations as they progress with their metering upgrade.

“We have four employees working on meter management where we previously had 16 people,” said Gayneaux. “We’ve reassigned staff to other tasks and projects to advance customer service.”

The benefits of operational efficiencies—combined with the flexibility of remote meter monitoring—have proven invaluable as EMWD deals with challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing them



to better adhere to social distancing requirements.

“We don’t have to deploy technicians in the field as often to respond to the needs of the community,” said Gayneaux. “Having access to accurate, real-time data allows us to answer questions and service customers without the need for an in-person visit.”

Recycle and reuse

EMWD is widely regarded as one of the nation’s leading recycled water agencies. Smart technology has also benefited their recycled water customers. EMWD currently treats 45 million gallons of wastewater each day, turning it into tertiary-treated recycled water. EMWD uses 100 percent of their recycled water for beneficial reuse during normal years, about two-thirds of which is used for agricultural production. Recycled water is also used for schools, parks, golf courses and public landscaping.

“Non-residential customers in agriculture, parks and schools all rely on recycled water as a sustainable, cost-effective resource,” said Gayneaux. “Our smart water network helps us oversee the distribution of water resources and consult with customers to make sure they’re getting the best value.”

In 2018, EMWD received a \$210,000 grant from the United States Bureau of Reclamation to support new technology to allow agricultural users to track in real time

their water use, including comparing actual usage to their yearly allocation of recycled water.

“We can set up weekly reports to help customers stay on track with their goals,” said Gayneaux. “It’s a big factor in why we’re achieving nearly 100 percent reuse of our recycled water.”



Agricultural users can track their water use daily and compare actual usage to their yearly allocation of recycled water.

No slowing down

Water use efficiency and customer service remain the priority for EMWD as they advance their smart water system. The utility is now expanding their solution with the rollout of Sensus ally® meters on residential accounts, allowing technicians to expand remote management capabilities while enhancing leak detection capabilities.

“We always look for ways to expand services to benefit our customers,” said Gayneaux. “Our ability to keep finding these scenarios that are mutually beneficial for both our customers and EMWD is only possible with our Sensus smart utility network.”