City of Evans, CO Reduces Estimated Meter Reads by 94 Percent

Sensus technology improves billing accuracy and supports growing population

CASE STUDY

Challenge

- **Improve billing accuracy and customer service**

Solution

- **Implement a smart water network from Sensus**

Reach Farther

- **Provide a clean, safe environment to a growing population**

Old meters slow operations and lose money

It's billing time at the City of Evans, Colorado water department. For the past 14 years, Randy, an Evans technician, has devoted days out of every month to drive the streets and read each of the city's 6,500 water meters. Despite Randy's hard work and long hours, the reads aren't always accurate because the aging meters estimate the data. Plus, the process takes so long that there's often not enough time to review the data before the bill goes out the door.

Spring flowers bloom at the City of Evans Community Complex, a popular gathering spot for residents and home to the city's water department.

"We couldn't provide customers with the best possible service because our technicians were tied up for days each month manually reading meters,"

said Joni Crist, utility billing specialist, City of Evans, Colorado. "We knew we needed to make a change."

Managing rapid population growth

The City of Evans is located about an hour north of Denver. With approximately 20,000 residents and counting, the city is growing so fast that its newly-built Prairie Heights Middle School is already at capacity. Challenges with meter reads and billing will only get bigger as the population grows.

Wasted time and resources

Aging meters and inaccurate reads are not just a hassle for the utility, they prevent the water department from meeting the needs of its customers. A case in point: the meters were so old that, at one point, approximately 1,500 of them were billed using estimated water use, some for as long as four years. This situation meant incorrect monthly bills for nearly one quarter of the city's residents.

"After we finally collected data from our meters, we had to rush to get the bills out the door," said Crist. "We had very little time to examine the invoices for

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potential leaks and other problems that were affecting our customers."

It was time for the city to update its infrastructure and improve customer service.

A Sensus iPERL meter connects to a SmartPoint to gather data for the utility.

Finding the right solution

The City of Evans deployed Sensus iPERL® residential and OMNI™ commercial water meters, as well as the FlexNet® communication network in order to:

- Improve billing accuracy
- Cut the time it took to conduct meters reads
- Better serve its customers

Improving customer service with new technology

"Sensus' technology helps us better serve our customers," said Crist. "With the extra review time during our monthly billing process, we can catch issues before they are reflected on their bills and save them money."

The smart water network has empowered the city to decrease the number of estimated meter reads from 1,500 to 74. This whopping 94 percent reduction has been a game changer in operational efficiency and customer service. At the start of the monthly billing process, Evans now receives accurate usage data—without having to drive the city's streets.

The utility also reduced the number of manual meter reads it conducts by 84 percent. This means that Randy can use the time he previously spent reading meters helping customers. Plus, the staff has time to examine invoices and proactively alert customers to potential water leaks or other issues. Now when Randy visits a home or business, they know that he's there to help.

"Our technicians have noticed a

difference in customer satisfaction," said Crist. "Armed with data collected from new meters, they're able to work with customers to quickly identify solutions to their problems."

Investing in a solution for today and tomorrow

Because the FlexNet system is scalable, it can help the city fulfill its quest to be an "economically diverse, self-sufficient community providing a clean, safe, family-friendly environment with growth-oriented infrastructure."

As a growing community, Evans is poised to handle utility billing for its new residents with greater efficiency and accuracy. No matter how many people call this Evans community home, they can count on superior service from the city's dedicated staff.

"We're so glad we upgraded our technology when we did," said Crist. "Not only does it benefit our current customers, but it also gives us the high-quality equipment we need to be ready for the newcomers to our city. We've set ourselves up for sustainable growth for years to come."