

CASE STUDY



Berkeley County Water & Sanitation Takes Big Leap Forward with Big Data from Sensus

Technology enables utility to spot trends, troubleshoot and prepare for the future

Too much data, too little insight

Berkeley County Water & Sanitation (BCWS) has moved from manual meter reads to remote readings that happen with the push of a button. The result? Massive amounts of data but no clear view into how to use it to benefit its more than 24,000 customers and better plan for tomorrow.

“Data by itself isn’t enough,” said Terry Hughes, water distribution superintendent, BCWS. “You have to understand it and turn it into intelligence you can act upon. But that’s not an easy task, and we needed help.”

Growing at a tremendous pace

Located in the southeastern corner of South Carolina, Berkeley County covers 800 square miles of low country, making it the largest county in the Palmetto State. It’s also the fastest growing county in the state and the 40th fastest growing in the nation since 2010.

Providing excellence in customer service is the utility’s mainstay. To deliver on that promise, they must know how much water their customers use today and determine how much they’ll need tomorrow.

Connecting on average more than 100 new customers per month, the utility went looking for a longer lens.

Uncover nuggets of knowledge

April Shuler, data management supervisor, has been with BCWS for nearly 15 years. During that time, she’s seen significant change as she moved from customer service to meter reading to data entry to her current role.

Her latest charge has been to make sense of the data collected during meter reads and to uncover the nuggets of knowledge that best position the utility for anticipated growth.



BCWS prides itself in providing outstanding customer service to its more than 24,000 customers.

Challenge

Turn meter data into knowledge

Solution

Maximize the value of the FlexNet communication system with Sensus Logic MDM Application Suite

Reach Farther

Make data-driven decisions and better plan for the future

“Using the information Sensus provides, we’re able to make informed decisions and position Berkeley County for whatever comes our way. We’re excited about what the future holds and know we’ll be able to provide our customers with the excellent service they deserve.”

She focuses on consumption patterns and missing meter data that comes from a series of reports to answer questions like these:

- Why are vacant or inactive accounts showing water usage?
- Why do some accounts show continuous use and others no use?
- Where is a particular meter located?
- Why is a meter not sending register reads?

Answers to these questions provide the knowledge BCWS needs to plan for and adjust to future demands. They also form the foundation of the excellent customer service she and her co-workers strive to provide.

“The information I receive helps me make informed decisions,” said Shuler. “With it, I have a clear snapshot of what’s going on and how to leverage our network to better serve our customers.

The logical next step

The path to answering those questions began in 2006 when BCWS first implemented radio read capabilities. From there, it was a natural progression to the Sensus FlexNet® communication system, a long-range radio network that enables the utility to remotely monitor and manage their distribution assets. Recently, BCWS updated their system with the Sensus® Logic MDM™ Application Suite. With Logic, they can:

- Organize, process and validate data
- Display views of meters within their network
- Deliver notices to key personnel to communicate system issues and status

Uncover data-driven solutions

Since deploying FlexNet, the utility has significantly reduced the time it takes to read meters. What once took nearly three weeks is now accomplished in just two hours.

The Logic suite enables them to extend those capabilities and get the most out of meter read data by efficiently organizing, processing and validating it. With this information, they can:

- Notify customers of potential leaks within 24 hours of their meter showing continuous consumption



A BCWS technician programs a Sensus water SmartPoint® at a customer home.

- Monitor inactive accounts on a daily basis to ensure no unauthorized water usage is occurring
- Equip crews with the right parts to resolve the issue in one call instead of many
- Read all meters on the same day
- Analyze data to spot trends, troubleshoot and prepare for the future

Boldly move into the future

Some organizations might have reservations about what tomorrow holds, especially in dynamic locations like Berkeley County.

Not Hughes and his team. They’re not overwhelmed by the pace of change. In fact, the BCWS team sees nothing but a bright future ahead.

“Using the information the Sensus technology provides, we’re able to make informed decisions and position Berkeley County for whatever comes our way,” said Hughes. “We’re excited about what the future holds and know we’ll be able to provide our customers with the excellent service they deserve.”

About Sensus

Sensus helps 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 by responding to evolving business needs with innovation in sensing and communications technologies, data analytics and services. Learn more at sensus.com.