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Experience Location



Minnesota, USA

CLOCKING UP EFFICIENCIES IN ADVANCED METER SYSTEMS

A service provider for utilities sees real productivity gains through integrating old and new data.

Overview

SL-serco coordinates regular maintenance and audits of automated meter infrastructure (AMI) and advanced meter reading (AMR) systems for utility providers and metering service providers. Recently, a new ability to combine old and new data in their GIS data collection technology has introduced even greater job efficiency.

CHALLENGE

SL-serco of St. Anthony, Minnesota, supports the automated meter infrastructure (AMI) and advanced meter reading (AMR) systems of water and other utility providers. They coordinate field activities for audits, repairs and data collection, then leverage the resulting data to help utilities optimize their advanced metering systems. Reed Sutter is manager of AMI/AMR systems support.

Sutter has long relied on electronic data collection rather than pen and paper, but until recently efforts to increase efficiency were hindered by an inability to combine old data with new.

SOLUTION

In 2013 Sutter's team adopted the Trimble® TerraFlex™ mobile app, running the app on a variety of devices. "TerraFlex didn't enable us to combine old and new data, but it worked excellently," said Sutter. "GPS coordinates increased our efficiency by accurately locating meters on a property." However, the first immediate benefit TerraFlex provided was via its customizable form capability—Sutter now quickly creates forms in TerraFlex with all the different kinds of fields he wants.

"The forms are really easy to use. I get very few calls from the field," said Sutter. Data collected via the forms is automatically transferred by TerraFlex to the Cloud for access by office colleagues.

TerraFlex also allows staff to enter data while offline and then simply synchronize their devices when cell coverage is available. When they need to geo-reference an asset but GPS data isn't being logged, the process is again simple—they manually place a dot onscreen when collecting the data; later they add the GPS location via a Google satellite image.

"With TerraFlex Advanced, finally we can combine our old and new data and put TerraFlex to work on a lot more jobs."

Reed Sutter, Manager, AMVAMR Systems Support.

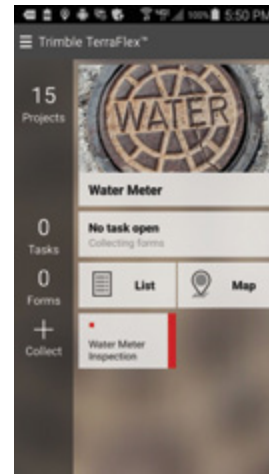
Sutter employed TerraFlex at every opportunity, but when the TerraFlex Advanced edition was introduced, finally his team could combine their old and new data and fully utilize the app.

For many auditing tasks it's important to track events; for example, meter replacements. "We import previous data and attach new installed meter data to it just by creating a new form," said Sutter. "When a field tech inputs data, they're just adding information to an existing record."

Re-routing sequences with GPS coordinates is easier too. AMR customers typically hold a set of accounts sequenced in a particular order for maintenance. By collecting GPS coordinates for existing meters in TerraFlex, SL-serco can use location information to create a faster route to follow for maintenance and data collection.

RESULT

By using an advanced-technology solution for collecting data and making the most of accurate GPS locations, Sutter and his team have transformed their work processes with "off the meter" efficiency. "We're able to use TerraFlex Advanced for so much more. It's effective, simple to use, and very reliable."



Customized forms provide staff with exactly the fields they require, so they can collect the right information.

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