



Cameron Parish Waterworks Case Study

June 16, 2006 — “The only things working in our entire water system were the DIALOG 3G Wireless RF AMR water meters and Drive-By System from Master Meter.”

That’s a quote from James Cox, general manager of the Cameron Parish (Louisiana) Waterworks Water, after Hurricane Rita – which hit the Gulf Coast just three weeks after Hurricane Katrina – nearly shut down his entire water system.

As he watched the news and weather reports tracking the hurricane, James knew he would have major problems after it passed. He was displaced by the storm, but returned the day after to survey the damage and establish a plan to restore water service to his customers. At the time, there were about 1,500 connections, most flooded in several feet of seawater.

“The major reason we had installed the new 3G system to our water system was because it is a self-contained unit and has no wires. We asked around and found that if you had wires and a rodent problem, you would have cut wires. Here we have crawfish, moles and snakes and we liked the idea that the 3G is a self-contained unit with no wires and easy to put in the ground,” he said. “We figured that if we were going to advance our system that much, we should get the best we could afford and Master Meter was our best choice, and lower than their competition.”

Rita’s storm surge had flooded his entire community, smashing buildings and fracturing underground pipes and connections. Their water tower lost its water pressure, so the objective was to close the necessary shut-off valves and pumping water back to the tower to re-establish pressure. Then to establish service for their customers, lines would be flushed from the shut off valves to the customer meters.

A big problem was finding those meters, since all were either under water or buried under several feet of debris. One bright thing in this time of hard work and long hours was that the 3G AMR meters could be quickly found because they were still signaling despite the pounding they had received.

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With the help of a few people outside of his staff, James was able to put more than 1,000 of his customers back in service within four of five days. “It wasn’t potable water but they could flush the toilet, take a shower and that made a huge difference.” James continues, “Today our community still continues to recover and grow because of the storm, but our water system plans are moving forward to serve our growing community.”

To that end, James’ labor cost for meter reading has gone down about two-thirds and he’s now up to 2,600 customers. Cameron is now looking at a plan to take its complete system to a Master Meter drive-by system. James figures that if it worked during and after a hurricane while underwater, then it will work just fine every day.

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