

South Mesa Water Co. Improves Customer Service, Conservation and Operational Efficiency with Hot Rod™ from Mueller Systems



A forward-thinking water utility in Calimesa, California, South Mesa Water Co. recognized that, in order to support future service demands, it would need to implement a technology that would help it to protect its precious water sources and improve operational efficiency and customer service.

situation

Operational efficiency and conservation are increasing in focus among water utilities across the United States, however, they are especially important to Calimesa, Calif.-based South Mesa Water Company. This is because South Mesa Water Co. relies solely on its local ground water resources to provide drinking water to residents throughout the City of Calimesa and the City of Yucaipa, as it has done for nearly 100 years.

A forward-thinking water utility, South Mesa Water Co. recognized that, in order to support future service demands, it would need to implement a technology that would help it to protect its precious water sources and improve operational efficiency and customer service. As a result, officials of South Mesa Water Co. began searching for an advanced automated meter reading (AMR) system that could be integrated with the new water meters it was adding throughout its service area as part of its meter replacement program.

action

South Mesa Water Co. turned to Mueller Systems, a leading provider of innovative water infrastructure products and services and technologically advanced metering systems for water, electric and gas systems.

It decided to implement Mueller Systems' high performance AMR system, Hot Rod™. The components of the Hot Rod AMR system, which include the Hot Rod™ Radio Transmitter Unit,

Street Machine™ Mobile Data Collector, and EZ Reader™ Software, work together to help utilities reduce the amount of time it takes to manually collect meter reads, more effectively manage water usage, and improve customer service.

Street Machine and EZ Reader Software—Hot Rod's data management tools—automatically collect meter reads and instant data logging alarms as a meter reader drives along a selected route, while providing progress screens and route maps, which display collected readings and meters that still need to have their data collected. Meter locations are graphically represented on route maps by blue icons that disappear as soon as readings are collected. If a leak, reverse flow, no flow or tamper alarm is received, the corresponding icon will turn a different color, immediately prompting the meter reader to proactively approach customers about possible leaks or other service related issues.



results

Once the Hot Rod installation was complete, South Mesa Water Co. quickly saw results. According to South Mesa Water Co.'s general manager, Dave Armstrong, the amount of time needed to collect monthly meter readings was immediately reduced.

“It used to take us approximately six days each month to manually collect readings using two meter readers,” said Armstrong. “However, with Hot Rod in place, we are now able to collect all of our readings in less than one day—using only one meter reader.”

The time we save as a result of Hot Rod's efficiency gives us the added bandwidth needed to focus on other projects."

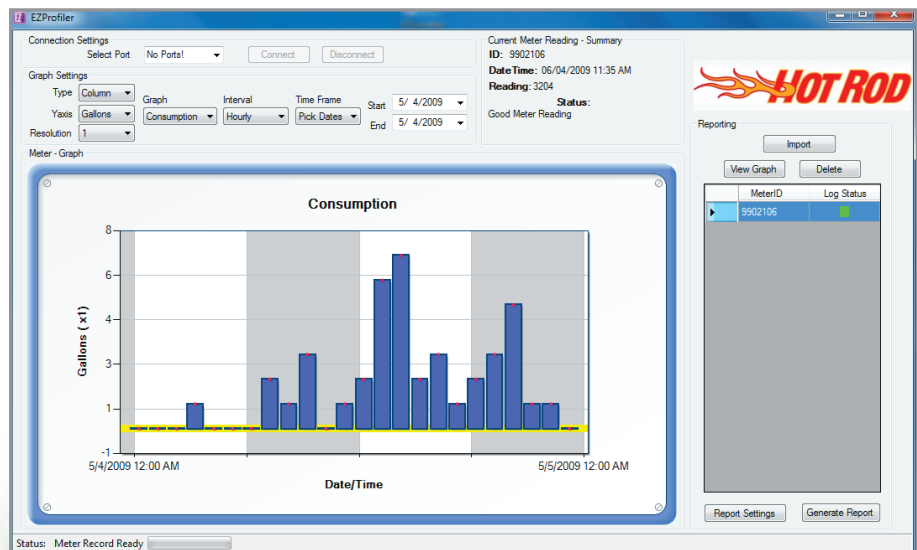
In addition, the wealth of information provided through Hot Rod's features—particularly consumption profiling and 170-day storage of meter readings—has helped South Mesa Water Co. improve customer service in a variety of ways. According to Armstrong, "The amount of information provided by the Hot Rod system is unbelievable. If a customer calls with a billing inquiry, the service representative can access their six month usage history and talk it through it with them or provide a printed copy to answer their questions and help them understand how their usage behavior affects their bills."

Instant data logging alarms provided by Hot Rod are also leveraged by South Mesa Water Co. to alert customers of potential household water leaks, which are responsible for losing water that customers might otherwise be unknowingly billed for.

"Leak alarms that we receive through Hot Rod are added to our 'leak list,' a list of accounts that we send letters to in order to inform them that they may have a water leak on their property," said Armstrong. "Customers really appreciate this proactive approach, as it shows that we take conservation seriously and that we are trying to help them save money while addressing potential problems before they become service issues."

South Mesa Water Co. credits Hot Rod along with its meter replacement program and recent rate increases on high-rate users for helping it to reduce water usage in its service area by more than 22 percent.

The Hot Rod AMR System graphically illustrates monthly, daily and hourly water usage rates to meter readers while they are in the field. Not only does such information help meter readers to investigate potential service issues, it also enables South Mesa Water Co.'s service representatives to provide historical consumption rates to customers in order to help them better understand their water bills.



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