



# CASE STUDY

## Field Service

### XPLORE TAPPED TO SERVE TENNESSEE'S LARGEST UTILITY DISTRICT

Grown out of a need to provide safe drinking water to the rural residents of Rutherford County, the Consolidated Utility District (CUD) serves more than 41,000 customers and maintains twelve hundred miles of water line. In 1988, the CUD served a little more than 10,000 customers with thirty-two employees. Today, the CUD is the largest utility district in the State of Tennessee, growing at a rate of more than 3,000 customers per year with ninety-employees. With this significant rate of growth, the CUD's Systems Manager, Andy Koostra, knew he needed to find ways to streamline and greatly improve the efficiency of the district's billing operation.

"Until January of 2007, all of CUD's orders were handled with pen and paper. Service orders were either picked up in person or dispatched over 2-way radio," explained Koostra. "This introduced error and significant travel time to and from the office to pick up the orders. With all the new technologies available, I knew there had to be a better way."

In January of 2007 CUD implemented a new billing system that included a module to send service orders to the field. The modules would be used to receive and complete all orders. After looking at their mobile computing options, Koostra chose the Xplore iX104C3 rugged mobile PC.

"I was looking for a product that was flexible and easy to use and saw a demonstration of the Xplore tablet at the ESRI User Conference in San Diego. I felt Xplore had the best overall package of tablet, docking station and accessories and it was also equipped with Verizon Air Cards, which we use in all of our tablets," said Koostra.

After testing and evaluating one Xplore unit, Koostra was impressed and put in an order for more. "We purchased the units and installed them in trucks to have the GIS maps available in the field. We knew at that time that mobile service orders were going to be implemented in the future. As the new billing system was implemented we added the Air Cards to the existing Xplore tablets and purchased more for additional trucks and personnel."



As to performance, Koostra says, “Their ruggedness and outdoor viewable are among the Xplore tablet’s best aspects. If you can’t see the screen in direct sunlight the tablet is useless. Our field employees are now better informed and the office staff has instant feedback on work preformed. All of our work is real time now. It’s quite a difference.”

Switching from two-way radio to Xplore’s rugged mobile computers has enabled CUD to send service orders directly to the field and save on time and gas. “Our customer service has also improved by allowing us to respond more rapidly to requests,” said Koostra. The change also dramatically improved CUD’s communications – both with customers and in the field. “Many times we will be doing “cut offs” or disconnecting a customer for non-payment and the customer will come in that same day to pay. With the tablets and our billing system the CSR (Customer Service Representative) is able to see if the order has already been completed which would result in a increased charge to the customer or if it has not been completed the order can be cancelled once payment is received. In the past this was all done by 2-way radio and paper which resulted in miss communication and lag time between CSRs and field crew.”



Overall, CUD has experienced a tremendous increase in efficiency. Just in October 2007 alone, CUD completed 6,715 work orders through the new work order system using Xplore tablet PCs. In total, CUD completed 44,942 work orders since going live on March 1, 2007, through November 1, 2007.

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