



## Southern California Water Company: Safety First, Savings Follow

Oct 1, 2003 - John Standi, Water Loss Supervisor, Southern California Water Company had an issue that many have found themselves faced with in large urban areas. The overall water system has a growing 270,000 individual meters over a wide southern California area. John had a safety problem with his meter readers in the LA area from dogs to hard to reach and read meters that were in customers' fenced backyards with their dogs and no one home on week-days. The only way to read many of them was to make an appointment on Saturday and hope they would keep the appointment or it would be another week before the opportunity to read that meter would be possible again. Not only was a time consuming problem, it was a safety problem for the meter readers.

There had to be a better way to handle the high risk, time consuming issues for his meter readers. With the Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) technology, John found his answer. His readers could drive by the meters in their trucks to get the readings avoiding the neighborhood walks with its safety perils. They could even get the fenced backyard meter reads from the street.

His AMR choice was Master Meter's DIALOG 3GTM Wireless RF System, he realized the best of safety with a double bonus of labor savings and therefore, cost savings. "It sometimes took four to five days of work to get some of the routes read but with the AMR system, we get the readings as we drive down the street, first time in a matter of minutes. We ensure the safety of our meter readers in the safety of their trucks out of harms way, as well as save an incredible amount of time in what were once our hardest areas to read meters."

John has about 7000 3G AMR meters in meter boxes in the ground now for about six months "...and their doing well." One of the major benefits of his 3G selection was the fact that the meter and the RF radio with its antenna are combined in one unit all under the register glass. The meter is factory pre-programmed to start when the water starts to flow. "They call it wireless RF and I didn't really appreciate that until we started to install them. There are no wires to run. It is truly wireless, self contained. There was no special meter box issues, no antenna to install, no running of external wire or separate electronic boxes in the meter box or special meter programming." John was pleased with how the 3G installation was like a regular meter installation, "With nothing extra to do with this type of AMR meter install, we just put them in the box and turned on the water. It starts by itself and you can start reading it right then. I don't even have to worry about the gophers."

John has been working with Master Meter to retrofit some of his earlier DIALOG product to upgrade them to AMR by using a "Clip-On Universal" RF radio that reads through the glass register and broadcasts the meter readings to the passing truck. Just recently, John reports, "We have been able to read the clip-on from as far away as 1500 feet from the meter boxes."

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John views the future as a place where we will find things different because of applied technology. He says, "One of the things that technology advances has begun to do for us is make it easier to read meters and upgrade my in-service meters to AMR which long-term lowers my cost. AMR drive-by readings are just the beginning of what will be happening for us. In the next five years or so, when we have the new fixed networks in place and we are reading the meters from several miles away not just from the middle of the street. It is an interesting time for us but more than that it is time for us to apply the proven technology to our service to benefit our customers. I believe that is what we are doing at Southern California Water."

"Technology solutions brought us safety first and our savings followed."

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