



Benton PUD Builds a Foundation for the Future

WASHINGTON UTILITY ENHANCES ELECTRICITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND IMPROVES CUSTOMER SERVICE



CHALLENGE

Automate meter reading capabilities and improve customer service

SOLUTION

Deploy the Sensus FlexNet communication network

REACH FARTHER

Harness remote connect/disconnect and outage management capabilities to deliver greater operational efficiencies

Located in the heart of Washington State's Tri-Cities—also known as “Washington Wine Country”—**Benton Public Utility District (PUD)** serves more than 50,000 customers across Kennewick, Finley, Benton City, Prosser and outlying areas. While residents of this “year-round paradise” are known for a sense of fun and adventure, they want their electric utility to be serious about reliable and efficient service.

To proactively address customers' needs for higher quality service, Benton PUD realized they needed to think bigger about their electricity infrastructure, and that meant upgrading to advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) technology.

“We wanted to deploy a network that would allow us to improve our overall operations and our communication with customers, so AMI made sense,” said Benton PUD Operations Director Steve Hunter.



Laying the foundation

The Benton PUD team knew that the communication network would be the foundation for a successful AMI deployment, so they put that at the top of the criteria list. Specifically, the utility wanted a network that would allow for fast communication with electric meters while also serving as the foundation for future applications.

“We knew that an AMI deployment was an investment, so we asked ourselves: to meet our customers’ expectations, what other services do we need to offer our customers down the road, and how can this network help enable that?” said Hunter.

The local public power provider also identified advanced metering capabilities as a critical need to connect and disconnect meters and improve outage response time and accuracy of meter reads.

Sensus makes the grade

After evaluating AMI solutions, the Benton PUD team determined that the **Sensus AMI solution** met all the criteria and would lay a foundation for future success. One of the biggest factors in the decision was the **Sensus FlexNet® communication network**, a robust, two-way communication network that offered exactly the right capabilities to meet both current and future needs.

“After review, everyone felt Sensus was the right technology for our size of utility,” said Hunter. “We felt the FlexNet system was a reliable network that would allow us

to develop more capabilities and extend additional benefits to our customers.”

The utility team believed that the functionality of the meters would improve customer service while also enhancing their outage response time. The utility also found the meter’s remote connect/disconnect functionality attractive for both the customer and utility operations.

Benton PUD’s AMI solution includes a mix of Sensus meters including the **Stratus® electricity meter**.

Delivering value for Benton PUD customers

Now fully deployed, Benton PUD’s AMI solution has exceeded expectations. For



Benton PUD installers upgrade customer homes with the enhanced capabilities of the Sensus Stratus meter.



"We know we made the right choice with Sensus because the value of our network has increased over time."

STEVE HUNTER *Operations Director, Benton PUD*

starters, the FlexNet system has delivered the flexibility and security the utility desired while allowing them to add more enhancements for customers.

"We know we made the right choice with Sensus because the value of our network has increased over time," said Hunter. "Since our deployment, we've been able to add a new customer portal so residents can monitor their usage and have plans to launch a prepay program by the end of the year."

Because the meters communicate to the utility when there is an outage, Benton PUD has improved response time to outages and is able to pinpoint issues that previously would have never been detected.

All this helps Benton PUD work more proactively on behalf of its customers. When

the utility receives an outage notification, it can communicate with customers and swiftly initiate repairs.

"It's a win-win for our staff and customers," said Hunter.

Charting a path to the future

The Sensus AMI solution is Benton PUD's foundation for the future. As the industry progresses and new smart grid applications hit the market, the utility will continue to evaluate new capabilities.

"We are constantly evaluating new features and asking the question, 'what's next for our customers?'" said Hunter.

"Smart applications such as data analytics, distribution automation and software as a service are all on the table looking ahead. It's all made possible with our AMI solution."