

Davie County Public Utilities Improves Customer Service and Operational Efficiency with Hot Rod™ from Mueller Systems

**HOT ROD**

Davie County, NC is located immediately southwest of Winston-Salem where it spans approximately 267 square miles of the state's heartland, also known as the 12-county Piedmont Triad. Its water system contains 11,000 service connections in a 400 square mile service area that is divided into 30 rural reading routes.

situation

The manual bi-monthly collection of readings from each meter was no small challenge—or expense—for Davie County Public Utilities. Oftentimes, meters in its water system were separated by a half-mile or more, and covering the routes could take a driver and a meter reader as many as 50 days. To help improve operational efficiencies and reduce the amount of time it took to collect monthly reads, Davie County Public Utilities began searching for an advanced meter reading (AMR) system.

“Davie County and its townships are growing, and we knew we wouldn't be able to keep up considering how long it took us to collect monthly readings over such a wide service area,” said Johnny Lambert, director of Davie County Public Utilities. “As a result, we began researching AMR. And, since we have a bi-monthly billing cycle, we were especially interested in a solution that stored meter reads throughout the entire billing period.”

action

The county turned to Mueller Systems, a subsidiary of Mueller Water Products, Inc., and leading provider of innovative water infrastructure products and services and technologically advanced metering systems for water, electric and gas systems. Davie County Public Utilities decided to implement Mueller Systems' high performance AMR system, Hot Rod™, in addition to a phased replacement of its outdated water meters with Hersey brass water meters. 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.

Hot Rod units transmit monthly consumption reads and leak and backflow alerts via radio frequency, while internally storing hourly consumption data for up to 170 days (six months) for retrieval. 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 AMR System was in place and the meter replacement project was underway, Davie County began seeing results. The operational efficiency provided by the Hot Rod AMR System helped to drastically reduce the amount of time it takes Davie County Public Utilities to collect monthly reads.

“It used to take me weeks to manually collect readings from the 3,000 meters in my zone. Now, I can easily collect the same amount of readings in less than two days.”

Josh McChesney, Meter Technician, Davie County Public Utilities

According to Lambert and McChensey, the time savings provided by Hot Rod allows them to focus on improving customer service and water conservation. “Before, I would spend the bulk of my time collecting reads, but now I have time to focus on other projects, such as checking for leaks that are responsible for losing drinking water that customers never see.”

Data logging and consumption profiling made possible by Hot Rod’s storage of 170 days of consumption data and alarms provide Davie County with detailed information that helps identify leaks and track water loss.

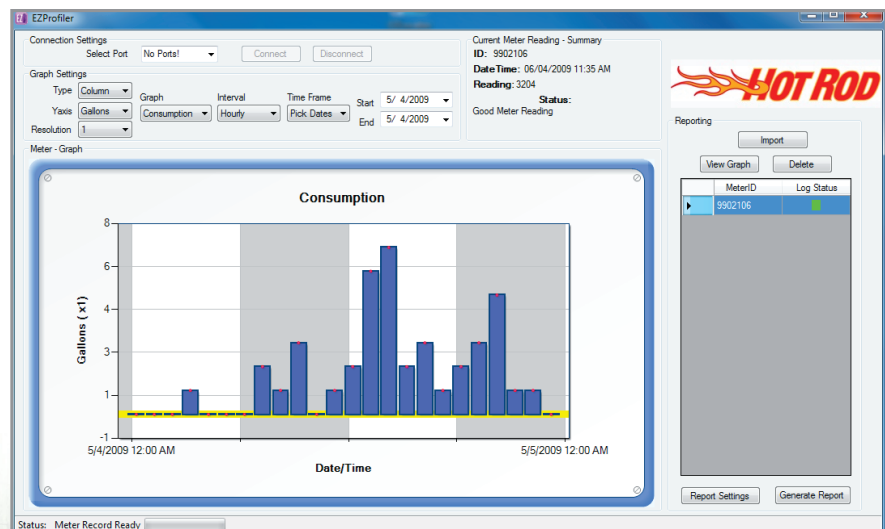
“The Hot Rod system alerts us to potential household water leaks and backflows while we are cruising our routes. If a blue dot suddenly turns red on our route map, we can immediately pull over to further investigate the issue. The system allows us to quickly retrieve stored usage data while we’re in the field, and if we notice trends that indicate abnormal water usage over a period of time, we can alert the customer that they may have a household leak. And, if the data is indicative of a relatively severe leak, we can even temporarily shut off service to help prevent potential property damage.”

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 Davie County service representatives to provide historical consumption rates to customers in order to help them better understand their water bills.

“Implementing this technology helps us to meet our commitment of providing customers with the best service we can while ensuring that they continue to receive safe, clean drinking water.”

Johnny Lambert, Director,
Davie County Public Utilities

According to Lambert, helping to resolve customer billing issues and concerns is another valuable benefit provided by Hot Rod. “In the event of a billing complaint or customer concern over their water usage, our customer service representatives can retrieve the stored usage data and talk through it with them over the phone in order to help them better understand their charges,” said Lambert.



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With Mueller Water Products' long history, broad product portfolio and reputation for quality and service, we aim to play a key role in delivering and protecting our precious natural resources. Our goal is to deliver superior, cost-effective products and services.

Find out more ways in which Mueller Systems can help you increase efficiencies, reduce costs, conserve energy and water, and improve customer service by calling us today at 800-323-8584 or visiting www.muellersystems.com.



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