

Mission-Critical Monitoring In South Carolina

By Mission Communications

Treatment agency sees results from new monitoring system

Renewable Water Resources (ReWa) is a wastewater treatment agency in Greenville, S.C., that serves Greenville and parts of Laurens, Anderson, Pickens and Spartanburg counties in the upstate area. The utility infrastructure includes eight water resource recovery facilities that are serviced by 343 miles of interceptor lines and 60 pump stations. Effectively managing such a large network is challenging at best. Reliable communication is imperative to head off emergencies in remote locations. When an old dial-up phone system at a pump station failed due to a power outage, facility managers began to search for a more reliable way to monitor equipment.

Blake Visin, information system director with ReWa said the turning point was when a tree took out the phone and power lines at the agency's

largest pump station at Rocky Creek several years ago. A third-party contractor had failed to perform regular maintenance at the site. The station went one week without power, and the outage was not reported, which caused ReWa to lose more than 1.5 million gal of water.

"That was one of the indications that we needed to bring service back in-house," Visin said.

ReWa officials tried a temporary fix before pursuing a permanent solution.

"We set up a workstation with Trihedral client/server SCADA that did nothing but poll the CB4s," Visin said. "If that workstation failed to communicate or connect within 15 minutes, it set off an alarm. That was a Band-Aid approach to a failsafe checker."

Customized Monitoring for Essential Operations

ReWa managers soon realized that





Above: ReWa headquarters.
Right: ReWa mission statement.



land-based phone lines were neither an economical nor a reliable solution. Their temporary fix was spotty and limited the information they could obtain from equipment in their large service area. They needed something to reliably detect and track emergency events in real time, as well as provide regular reports that could be reviewed. Visin consulted with managers at the nearby Laurens County Water and Sewer Commission to learn how they were monitoring critical assets. They were using the Mission system in a large geographic area for dual water and wastewater monitoring and control of water tanks, water towers and pumps. After seeing the Laurens County setup, Visin said the decision to switch to Mission was a “no-brainer” and has been a lifesaver when troubleshooting remote locations.

“It [The Mission system] has saved our hides two to three times a month,” Visin said.

He said Mission has given utility workers the ability to designate areas that are the most mission-critical. They have been able to segregate collections systems and operations into two sectors on the Mission portal. Monitoring and reporting functionality are tailored to each department. Personnel from

both departments only see data that pertains to their job on the real-time viewer when they log in.

“This allows us to have a central site that IT can view and manage, but the assets of each group are separate,” Visin said. “For us, this is beautiful.”

Visin said critical elements such as power at a plant, inflow at pump stations and issues with pumps can be managed more efficiently and in more detail with Mission. He said he likes the fact that personnel can securely access the Mission site from anywhere, and no confidential information is at risk because it is isolated from their network.

Reliable Service a Selling Point

Visin said his staff is very happy that Mission intervenes quickly when they have an issue. He recalled an instance when some remote telemetry units were having trouble connecting. Mission staff contacted the cell carrier and got the proper answers, and the problem was solved. Visin’s staff quickly received brand new radios to replace the ones that were out of date.

“[Mission is] probably at the top of the list as far as customer service goes,” Visin said. “It is not a matter of being put on hold. Usually, the person we talk to is the person who can solve

the problem. That is huge, and the follow-up has been phenomenal. We almost would like to take Mission and hold it up to vendors and say that is the standard you need to have.”

ReWa is investigating other uses for the Mission units. Future plans include an expansion to the water resources recovery facilities with the potential for remote control.

“The demonstrated performance of these devices, coupled with Mission’s service level, has sold us on their products,” Visin said. “We consider them a business partner that has helped us succeed.” **WWD**

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