

CASE STUDY

ORION®

Radio Frequency System



ORION® Radio Frequency System

Hurricanes Avoided, Efficiency Improved

By: Ted Schaar

"Well, the worst hazard our meter readers faced was hurricanes," said Public Works Director Milton Hallman, who heads up the Water Treatment and Distribution Division of the City of Holly Hill, Florida.

Fortunately, hurricane season doesn't last long each year, but Florida's generally warm climate made more typical route hazards such as insects, pests and lightning storms year-round concerns for Holly Hill's readers. "Now, with the ORION® automated meter reading system," Hallman continued, "we won't have to send our people out into the elements, which is a major improvement."

Near the Everglades

Holly Hill is a city of about 12,000, located on the east central, coast of the state, between Daytona Beach and Ormond Beach. It was incorporated in the late 1800s and sits on a large "hammock"- an area of elevated land - on the edge of the Everglades.

The city rises between four and ten feet above the sunshine state's generally flat terrain, but this wasn't the primary reason "hill" was attached to its name. Instead, in 1877, William Flemming, an early settler who built a home on 4,000 acres he owned in the area, named the community after the Irish coastal town where he was born.

Reading goes from one month to one day

Badger Meter's ORION system will make life much easier for Holly Hill's meter readers and will also bring great efficiency improvements and cost savings to the city.

"Currently, it takes four full-time readers an entire month to read the meters," Hallman said. "Once ORION is fully operational, this will be reduced to just one person spending one day driving the route. We expect the system will pay for itself in about five years."

The ability to reduce costs was very important to Holly Hill because the city is largely developed and must pass costs on to residents directly. "Our neighboring cities still have a lot of growth potential," explained Holly Hill Utilities Supervisor Ray Beltrami, "so they can pass costs on to builders. But we're an older, established community, and we don't have that luxury. We have to do it on our own."

Lead content law

Beltrami also mentioned that some of the motivation for changing to the ORION system stemmed from a Florida law that mandates water meters not contain more than a certain amount of lead. During the ORION installation, water meters could also be changed-out.

Badger®, ORION® and CONNECT® are registered trademarks of Badger Meter, Inc.

This case study was originally published in Badger Meter's *CONNECTIVITY* newsletter in January 2004.

About the Author:

Ted Schaar is a freelance writer based in Brookfield, Wisconsin.



BadgerMeter, Inc.

P.O. Box 245036 • Milwaukee, WI 53224-9536
(800) 876-3837 • Fax: (888) 371-5982
www.badgermeter.com

Hurricanes Avoided, Efficiency Improved

"The law has existed for quite some time, but the state has really begun enforcing it now," Beltrami said. "Badger has zero-lead meters that can be connected using plastic, PVC pipe. The big advantage of PVC is that you connect the pipe using an epoxy-type cement. No lead-containing solder is required."

Experience with Badger Meter a deciding factor

The City of Holly Hill explored a number of options before choosing the Badger Meter ORION system. The fact that city personnel had experience with the company's products figured prominently in the decision.

"We started using Badger® meters in 1985 and found them to be virtually trouble-free and accurate, even after they had been in service for as long as 10 years," said Beltrami. "We've tested them extensively over the years, and I'd have to say they've been around 99% accurate, even after ten years of service. In fact, we've hardly ever found a Badger meter that was registering incorrectly. We were also impressed by the



City of Holly Hill Public Works Department: Oakalea McFall - Customer Service Representative, John Manuel - Customer Service Supervisor, Kristine Leston - Customer Service Representative, and Tina Lynch - Customer Service

range that the ORION® system could read meters."

Installation underway

Holly Hill hired a contractor to put the new meters in and the installation process is going well, with about a third of meters now ready for remote radio reads. Hallman pointed out that "in some cases, we only needed to change out the Badger® register, not the entire meter, so that saved us some money."

Customer Service Superintendent John Manuel, City of Holly Hill Utility Billing Department, said, "We've read the ORION meters once so far, and it went very well." Manuel also described ORION's CONNECT® software as "easy to use" and said it interfaced well with Holly Hill's billing system. "It took us about a day to learn the new system," he recalled, "and now it's a cinch."

Holly Hill happy with Badger Beltrami said that the city made the right decision to go with Badger Meter. "The price was right, too," he continued, "and we received good backing from

their support team. I feel very confident that if anything goes wrong, Badger will correct it."

Hallman concluded: "I wouldn't hesitate to recommend ORION and Badger Meter. Badger has worked with us so well and efficiently. From sales to training, their people have been excellent, across the board." ■