



# Ensuring Continuity of Service with a Limited Workforce

Emergency response is a critical aspect of delivering water and energy to communities around the world. Although thoroughly prepared to face natural disasters, nothing could have prepared utility and city service providers for the challenges they face today in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. With billions of people under “stay-at-home” orders or in quarantine and limited capabilities to maintain critical infrastructure, managing safe and reliable access to crucial resources such as gas and water represents an unprecedented challenge for many energy and water providers.

When asked about the impact of the COVID-19 situation, more than half of utilities<sup>1</sup> fear that the necessity of remote working and insufficient field service activities might keep them from accomplishing critical work. Eventually, this could affect the level of service that consumers have both come to expect from their utilities and also are relying on more than ever during this pandemic.

Solutions exist to help support utilities and cities alike fulfill their mission of delivering essential resources—safely and reliably—while still efficiently managing their operations with a reduced workforce.

1: <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/library/covid-19/pwc-covid-19-cfo-pulse-survey-global.html>

## The Right Technology Can Help

Radio or network-based remote reading helps adapt to social distancing and shelter-in-place conditions—and helps keep both employees and consumers safe.

Radio-based automated meter reading (AMR) revolutionized data collection processes for utilities and cities around the world. Supplemented by innovations in advanced metering infrastructure (AMI), wireless data collection techniques have evolved and improved ever since, successfully establishing these technologies as an indispensable part of billing use cases.

In a time of a global pandemic where social distancing, stay-at-home orders and increased emphasis on sanitation and cleanliness has been keeping up to half of the global population at home, remote reading systems help comply with safety rules, manage data collection and reading activities, and maximize resources in the field far more than traditional manual reading processes.

## Deploy, Detect, Resolve

With the right technology deployed, you can better detect issues throughout the delivery network—and then address and resolve those issues to maintain service.

In lockdown situations, while field agents might be scarce or limited in their ability to perform regular maintenance tasks or even collect data, the number of defects and leaks remain unchanged—and might even increase in residential areas due to the continual (and sometimes increased) use of water and energy.

Remote reading equipment, leveraging radio-frequency (RF) or networked communications technology, gather valuable data even while distancing orders are in place. Data from meters enable remote diagnosis capabilities, and leakage alarms help identify and locate essential maintenance needs. You can then prioritize field work and send employees to critical locations for onsite maintenance.

## Going Above and Beyond

Delivering critical energy and water resources is your mission. But what can you do to go above and beyond—and even better serve your community?

With billions of individuals staying home for sanitary and safety reasons, many are elderly, isolated and facing some very unfamiliar and unusual circumstances alone at home. Those who may rely on family members for some basic maintenance, daily check-ins and more may now be entirely self-reliant.

Remote-reading devices provide valuable insights and trends of water and energy consumption, sending alarms to the utility when detecting abnormal or unexpected usage. Constant or increasing water or gas flow at typically low-use times could indicate a leak or break in a service line at a home or business.

Armed with these insights, customer service representatives can reach out to consumers directly, let them know about potential issues and become another touchpoint for those isolated at home—solidifying utility and city service provides an essential resource during potential crises in the future.

**Over 80 million** mechanical water and gas meters were shipped in 2018. Auxiliary communication devices that enable remote reading and data collection are an accessible, readily-available solution that help ensure continuity of service and operations.

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## STAY CONNECTED IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Although the extent of the COVID-19 crisis is yet to be determined, daily challenges arise as you work to ensure the safe, reliable delivery of water and energy to consumers—and maintain your infrastructure with a limited number of field agents due to safety, quarantine and distancing rules.

The right technology can help you thrive during times like these. Well-established for billing purposes, remote-reading solutions (either RF or IoT/multi-purpose network) bring a solid answer to social distancing needs and maintenance procedures while operating with limited field agents, and beyond, create a link with isolated populations.



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