



Southern Pine to implement advanced meter reading

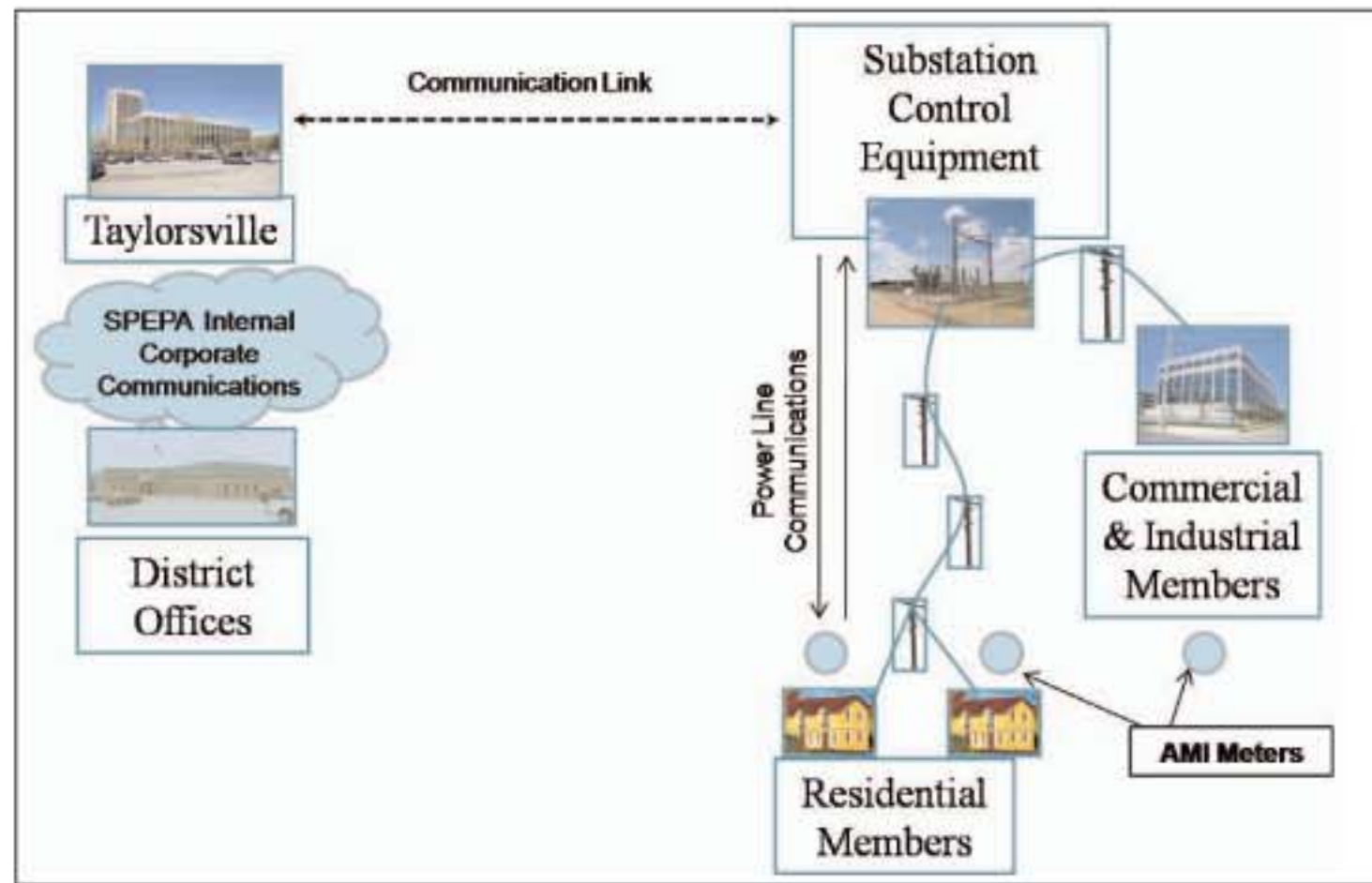
After months of research and collection of data regarding cost effectiveness and system reliability, Southern Pine Electric Power Association is in the process of implementing an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) System, which will allow two-way power line communications between our offices and electric meters. This project involves utilizing the latest technology to collect meter information over our existing power lines, thereby allowing more efficient service and reducing data collection errors.

One major component of the project is the replacement of each consumer's meter and the addition of new equipment in the substation, which will allow for communication with each meter. New data lines from the computer system in the headquarters office connected to each substation will allow for fast two-way communications from the office to each substation. This new infrastructure will allow an instantaneous meter reading or voltage check in as little as 15 seconds.

The present method of reading meters involves a person driving to each meter location once a month and manually entering the reading into a hand-held data collector. The reading is then downloaded into the computer system at a local office, and the bill is generated from the headquarters office. With the new infrastructure, the meter may be read more often and data collected more frequently. This system will help eliminate human errors in the collection of meter data.

The AMI system will be used to verify power restoration during outages, but it will not automatically report a power outage. It is important that our members understand that power outages should still be reported by calling your local Southern Pine office.

Why is this change needed? As your member-owned cooperative, we are always looking for ways to better serve our members using the most efficient and least costly methods available. This new technology will allow Southern Pine to provide its



members with lots of benefits.

What are the specific benefits? Here are just a few of the benefits made available through AMI technology:

- Improves electric service reliability.
- Allows more respect for member privacy and property access. With this new system, the only time our employees will need to be physically at your property is in the event of an electric service problem or when we perform an annual inspection of your electric service.
- Provides additional metering data to better assist members with billing and service questions.
- Improves response time for outage restoration.
- Eliminates contract meter-reading services.
- Gives capabilities to provide members with valuable electrical use information such as consumption patterns, outage and blink-count history, and

voltage information.

- Improves meter-reading accuracy and results in consistent billing periods. With an AMI system, meters can be automatically read on the same day of each month.
- Provides automated meter readings on all meters and collects electrical-use data in 15-minute intervals.
- Reduces losses by identifying power theft and other problems.
- Ensures better overall safety for Southern Pine employees.
- Promotes energy efficiency by providing real-time customer feedback on energy-use patterns.

When will this happen? The first members to be affected by this project will be those served from the north Hattiesburg substation. This substation was selected as the test substation because of the type loading and dense concentration of customers. Meters in this area are scheduled for

replacement during the months of May and June. The system will be extensively evaluated for a period of three months, and then the project will proceed to the remainder of the service area.

Creating a strategic plan for the implementation of AMI applications beyond simple meter reading is the first step in fully utilizing available technologies. A metering application historically used only for billing, AMI now encompasses engineering, operations, member services and other areas within Southern Pine.

"Adapting our internal processes to take advantage of the capabilities of the AMI system is something that all Southern Pine members can take great pride in," said Paul Myrick, assistant manager. "This is an opportunity we've been looking forward to for a long time, and we're convinced our members will see great benefits for years to come."

Dot Johnson set to enjoy retirement

Dot Johnson retired in January after several years of serving Southern Pine Electric Power Association members in the Brandon District.

Helping members on an individual basis was Dot's specialty as a district clerk.

Before joining Southern Pine's work force, Dot worked in sales at jewelry stores, operated her own antiques store and then assisted her husband, Jim, in his remodeling business.

In November 1997 she came to work as a cashier at Southern Pine's Brandon District office. She was posted at the drive-through window, where she took pride in giving members quick and accurate service with bill payments.

A few years later, she took on a new assignment that included assisting Southern Pine members with matters that required in-depth attention.

She also served as Southern Pine's contact person for local builders in need of electrical service for new construction. Dot's background in the remodeling business gave her

an edge in anticipating and understanding their needs.

In retirement, Dot looks forward to completing the cabin she and her husband are building in Neshoba County. They want to enlarge it in the future and relocate there from their home in Brandon. "We're real excited about it," she said.

An avid decorator who says she is constantly repainting and redecorating, Dot is enjoying selecting colors for the cabin's interior. "I watch HGTV—that's the only thing I need on my TV!" she said with a laugh.

The Johnsons are members of Brandon Baptist Church, where Jim took a job as building and grounds supervisor after retiring as a remodeling contractor.

Her son, Steve, lives in Tennessee with his wife, Rhonda, and their three children.

Southern Pine is grateful for the dedication with which Dot performed her duties every day, and we wish her and James a long and happy retirement.



Dot Johnson

THE ENERGY EXPERT

Yes, you can stay warm while cutting energy costs

With the chill of the winter season upon us, our minds turn to cutting corners to save money, or simply to make ends meet. As we try reducing rising power bills by sacrificing summer-like warmth, long showers and brilliant illumination, we may be disappointed when the power bill arrives in the mail.

Yet, there is hope! Years of experience from analyzing heating units provide a wealth of knowledge that can be shared.

The following is an outline of basic areas that can be inspected and evaluated for efficiency. The conclusions noted may help you learn how to use less electricity without sacrificing comfort and warmth during this winter season.

Central units. Factors that could reduce the efficiency of the kilowatt-hour deals with the unit itself. Some minor, relatively cheap adjustment could save hundreds of dollars each year.

- Clean or replace the air filter. A clean air filter serves two purposes: It cleans the air we breathe, and it prevents dirt and dust from collecting on the radiator-like coil on the inside of the central unit. Air flow affects the efficiency of the unit. Reduced air flow will force the central unit to run longer, thus increasing kilowatt-hour use.
- Insulate the central unit space. Within this space, the unit is usually built on a frame. The unit extends through the ceiling into the attic. The open areas within the space should be insulated and sealed off. Failure to insulate and seal these open areas may allow air from the attic to flow into the unit, causing dust and environmental elements to affect the air within the dwelling. Also, the attic air tempera-

ture may adversely influence the temperature of the dwelling itself.

Duct work. Examination and simple care of existing duct work could help reduce the workload of the central unit or other heating units within the home.

- Duct work joints are usually attached to the central unit in the attic. The duct work, in most units, connects to a sheet-metal box, and from there it branches off to the different areas of the dwelling. Duct work leaks are common at this junction box. Most duct work, even when installed properly, will develop leaks at different locations in the attic.

A common cause of leaks in the attic is the use of the attic space for storage. The weight of the stored items on the duct work may cause the joints to separate, causing the heated air to be lost in the attic.

- Duct work under the dwelling floor is more susceptible to early deterioration. The insulation wrap becomes brittle and quickly falls away from the duct work. Animals searching for protection from the frigid temperatures also tear at the insulation for warmth. Spider webs and outside domesticated animals hovering in a specific area are evidence of escaping air flow underneath a dwelling.

Mobile homes. The space underneath a mobile home is more prevalent for the



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loss of heated air.

- Double-wide and single-wide dwellings need inspection more frequently. During the construction of mobile homes, the duct work underneath has many leaks. One method for sealing leaks such as these is the installation of an insulation blanket underneath the total area of the dwelling.
- All openings should be covered and sealed to increase the efficiency of the mobile home's central unit. The installation of an insulation blanket may increase the efficiency of the unit; however, any opening or a

tear in the blanket itself will allow the loss of heated air and defeats the purpose of the insulation blanket altogether.

- As with any penetrable space, pets and animals will migrate to and search out warmth during the winter. Vulnerable duct work is a favorite spot for animals to puncture to gain access to warm air.

Heating unoccupied dwellings. Is it cheaper to run the unit at a lower temperature to keep the air relatively warm around the clock? Or is it cheaper to turn the unit off when the dwelling is unoccupied?

Things to consider:

- Heating a dwelling with inefficiencies, such as drafty windows or doors, may be less costly by turning the unit off when the dwelling is unoccupied rather than allowing the warm air to constantly leak through the drafts, resulting in your pay-

ing electrical expenses that do not directly benefit you.

- A unit that has been inspected and found to be in proper working condition may prove to be cost effective through round-the-clock heating at a lower temperature. However, a dwelling unoccupied for any length of time fails to provide the consumer with the full benefit of each kilowatt-hour of electrically heated air that is being purchased.

Programmable thermostat. One recommendation to lessen concerns of heating an unoccupied dwelling while reaping the benefits of a warm, comfortable home is the programmable thermostat.

- The programmable thermostat can be set to turn off during hours of the day in which the dwelling is unoccupied and to turn on prior to the arrival of the occupants.

• Operation of the programmable thermostat appears to be a complex task upon installation; however, in time most people find it simple to adjust.

Heating and cooling units contribute to a more comfortable lifestyle. The satisfaction of the operation of the central unit is greater if the unit is in proper working condition.

Properly working units provide an affordability of the unit as well as an enjoyment of the benefits of climate control within the dwelling.

It is recommended that a skilled tradesman be consulted when maintenance or repairs are necessary so that your unit operates efficiently for years to come.