



Volume 15 Issue 1

April, 2005

## IURPA RELIVING IT'S PREMIER EDITION -15 YEARS AGO



Volume 1 Issue 1 July, 1990 Newsletter

### International Utilities Revenue Protection Association

## Premier Edition

Welcome to the premier edition of the International Utilities Revenue Protection Association (IURPA) Newsletter. This newsletter was formulated as a communications link between all those individuals involved in the detection and investigation of energy theft. It is designed to be a forum for disseminating up-to-date information on IURPA activities, unique cases of energy diversion in the Revenue Protection Industry, and methods of detecting other utility revenue losses.

While all submissions may not be immediately included, we will try to provide you with an overview of the most current and innovative trends in the Revenue Protection field.

This Newsletter belongs to you, the membership of IURPA. Any comments or suggestions that you may have for improving this publication are welcomed and will contribute to the success of our joint efforts.



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## SNAP RING LOCK

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- ▼ No modifications needed



*\*User friendly Tri Tool Key operates all three McGard electric meter lock styles and Viper Lock.*

*That we are here is proof we ought to be here.*  
-Ralph Waldo Emerson



Kurt Roussell  
IURPA Chairman

When I originally came into this business in 1998, I began the task of finding Revenue Protection (RP) people to learn about industry, and get pointers from those who have been doing it. Like people say, why reinvent the wheel? I remember people being surprised my company was starting a RP program again. I learned from these people, that since the annals of time, RP programs came, gone, and then came back again. RP would be popular for a while, then, when the sharp blade of the corporate budgetary axe came, RP was the first to go. Years later, when the situations those customers of RP created got out of hand; then RP was back in favor.

Since then, I've seen budget cuts, elimination of programs, renewal of programs, and ultimately, the expansion of programs. It makes one ask, why does the industry fall in and out of love with RP?

*The utility industry is different from other industries because of an obligation to serve.*

I have some theories, but one thing seems to ring true, RP people want to catch the crook. They will take whatever steps are necessary to achieve the desired result, stop the cheating and thievery. This causes a problem when all utilities are trying to be a good community partner, a neighbor if you will, and don't want to publicly acknowledge the extent of the thefts and possibly appear as to be "policing the community."

## ON THE INSIDE

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2005 NURPA Fall Conference and Training Seminar

2005 Midwest Energy Theft Association

The utility industry is different from other industries because of an obligation to serve. Wouldn't it be nice if we could pick our customers? We can't. As I explained to executive several years ago, every time you read in the paper about a crime, every time you hear of someone being released from prison, or every time you here of some scam, just remember, they are our customers.

Once our RP people, committed to protecting the corporate revenues, makes it known in their territory that we will find the individual who is stealing and hold them accountable, the losses by theft are reduced. Later, when the corporation evaluates its program and sees the reduced losses due to theft, I believe they mistakenly believe the problem has been solved, so here comes the corporate axe to the RP budget. Three years later, the problem resurfaces, so the program is resurrected. Sometimes I believe that we are too good.

So where are we now? My belief is companies with RP programs are pretty much here to stay. Companies that don't have an active program – or previously scaled back over the years – are going to have renewed interest in RP. I believe the Sarbanes-Oxley Act will see to it. Let's keep moving forward finding those "unaccounted for" kilowatts and therms.

See you at the IURPA/SURPA/SCRPA Conference!



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## 2005 WSUTA CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN RENO, NEVADA

By JIM PETERSON • 2005 WSUTA PRESIDENT

This year's conference will be held at the Silver Legacy Resort and Casino in Reno, Nevada on August 23-26th 2005.

The Silver Legacy has graciously given us the same room rates that we had four years ago. The rates will be Sunday through Thursday \$72.00 a night plus taxes, and Friday and Saturday night will be \$109.00 plus taxes for those that choose to stay over the weekend. Airport shuttle is also provided. The cost of the conference is \$240, including \$25 for 2005 membership dues. This year's conference will include an "Advanced Revenue Protection" certification class presented by Karl Seger, with a certificate issued to those who pass the written test. Karl has new updated program to present. He will cover evaluating your present revenue protection program, monitoring success of your program over time, conducting a methodical crime scene investigation, determining amount of lost revenue for back billing, conducting interviews, and preparing cases for court.

As in the past, the vendors will be there in full force with their excellent presentations and followed by a vendor reception.

Last years conference went very well, which was a combined conference with IURPA. It was very interesting seeing and hearing about the theft problems that are encountered in Israel and the UK, with their electric service. Also, Tuey Paiyarat, from the Riverside Sheriffs Department, presented an excellent presentation on grow operations and meth labs that captured every ones attention.

I am looking forward to seeing each and every one of you at this years conference in August. Remember; always put "Safety First."



**President - Jim Peterson**  
Pacifcorp  
Bend, OR  
Phone: (541) 480-6963  
Jim.Peterson@pacifcorp.com



**1st Vice President - Lynda Steyaert**  
Arizona Public Service  
Yuma, AZ  
Phone: (928) 336-9874  
Lynda.Steyaert@aps.com



**2nd Vice President - Stephen Ardito**  
Southern California Edison  
Victorville, CA  
Phone: (760) 951-3252



**Secretary/Treasurer - Jim Gibson**  
PG&E  
Merced, CA  
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Southern California Edison  
Tulare, CA 93274  
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## PARTNERS IN CRIME PREVENTION

By LINDA STEYAERT – ARIZONA PUBLIC SERVICE

In the course of the energy theft investigation, I believe the more that partnerships are established, the better the potential outcome of the case. We tend to first think of the law enforcement partnership, the county attorney or city prosecutor, but the partnership with the code enforcement official is one that we need to consider as an equally valuable tool. The legal partnership normally takes place toward the end of the investigation, whereas code enforcement can be an asset when beginning your case. It can be a resource for assessor information, a cross reference for customer information, (ie: the owner of property by way of water customer as opposed to a tenant) business license information, a cross reference of other agencies such as the Registrar of Contractors, GIS (Geographical Information Services) for addressing and location of properties and of course the all important early identification of hazardous conditions.

In my case, the partnership that I have established with code enforcement personnel, has added that extra set of eyes as well as having someone at that location where you just don't feel secure in being by yourself or if you feel the need to have someone watch your back. It also provides a memory back up

and a second set of photos as well as an expert witness to add to the file when the case goes before the judge. It is that extra set of eyes from someone who brings electrical expertise as well as proficiency in the knowledge of code compliance, which may be a valuable tool in securing a property and requiring customer contact for reconnection.

This can benefit the Code Enforcement Official as well, as it requires code compliance for upgrades which will generate revenue from permits and inspections. I would presume that Code Enforcement, as well as Revenue Protection, requires justification of ones existence, in the form of numbers and dollars, which creates a win/win for all concerned. I have found that this partnership has opened opportunities for cross training and certifications with associated organizations, as well as an opportunity for not only giving presentations but having a professional for presentations when and where required.

Based on my own experience, your local Code Enforcement Official can be an extremely valuable asset, and I would urge each and every one of you to establish a working relationship with your local building departments.

## CENTRAL MAIN POWER – DEFENDING THE REVENUE STREAM

By Russ Farwell

Protecting revenue has become increasingly important to utilities and energy suppliers. One key area receiving more attention recently has been the utilities revenue metering. While long regarded as the cash register of the industry, the meter, along with its associated wiring and equipment, can be the source of significant revenue loss.

The magnitude of the problem has been and remains, by its nature, difficult to quantify. It may vary by utility or region. Some utilities go to great lengths to combat the problem, while others fail to recognize or refuse to acknowledge the problem exists in their territory. Unfortunately, as fuel and electricity prices increase so does the impact of the loss on utility revenues.

The loss of revenue can be attributed to both intentional and unintentional diversion (energy usage not measured or registered by the meter). In some cases, loss of registration may be attributed to faulty equipment or failed wiring. Some may even be created by honest mistakes in wiring or installation by the utilities own personnel or the customer's electrician. Unfortunately, some cases are the direct result of deliberate efforts designed to steal power.

*History has shown that many methods and schemes have been devised to divert energy, resulting in lower bills to the offending customer and loss of revenue to the utility.*

History has shown that many methods and schemes have been devised to divert energy, resulting in lower bills to the offending customer and loss of revenue to the utility. In the past, these methods were not widely known by the general public. However in today's information age, these diversion techniques are readily accessible to anyone with a PC and connection to the Information Super Highway (Internet). This has resulted in a significant increase in both the volume and sophistication of material available.

Central Maine Power Company (a subsidiary of Energy East) has adopted an integrated multi layered approach to both the prevention and detection of energy diversion. Employee involvement has been and remains the most important component in this effort. The use of technology, coupled with a comprehensive sealing program, provide the additional tools necessary to make CMP's efforts fruitful.

CMP's sealing program has existed for many years. The company has been pleased with the performance of the "secure" acrylic seals utilized on all cabinets and enclosures. "Secure" seals are those of the type, color code and use as specified in CMP's Meter Field Operating Procedures. "Secure" seals are tracked by serial number to the employee they are issued to. All CMP workers issued seals are required to complete a mandatory Revenue Protection Class.

Periodic (at least every other year) "secure" seal surveys are conducted during routine meter reading visits with the results recorded in the Electronic Meter Reading (EMR) handheld. This survey verifies that all meters are protected from tampering by an approved "secure" seal. Any locations that do not have a "secure" seal are reported and the Service Center has the

responsibility to inspect and reseal those locations.

The Revenue Data (Meter) Reader is on the frontline of the revenue protection effort. These employees visit virtually all meter locations each month. They are instructed to pull/tug on all meter seals to ensure that they remain intact and have not been tampered with. If they find a seal that is not intact, it is reported and a rated employee visits the location and investigates for diversion. Additionally, reports are available that inform field personnel that a seal has been replaced 3 times in the past year, a possible indication of a problem.

The Meter Readers are also instructed to look for anything suspicious, out of place or unsafe. This includes checking for holes in the meter cover, new wires entering the enclosure or weatherhead, magnets etc. Any of these may indicate an effort to divert power.

As mentioned earlier the Meter Reader utilizes an EMR handheld. This permits the entering of meter readings and electronic transfer of data to and from the company's mainframe system. The EMR handheld can be programmed to alert the Revenue Data Reader of abnormally low or high monthly usage. This tool is useful in both reducing errors in reading and alerting the employee that something may be wrong at the site.

CMP trains its other workers to be aware of conditions that may indicate diversion. Line workers are encouraged to observe suspicious wires attached to a customer's weatherhead. Service workers checking for zero usage are trained to listen for a TV, an air conditioner or other appliance that may be operating.

Even greater attention is given to higher value revenue accounts. In conjunction with PUC mandated testing of transformer rated services (annually for services over 750 V and every 2 years for services under 750 V), highly skilled Meter Technicians conduct a comprehensive site analysis. The site analysis includes checking for a secure seal, verify wiring and test switch connections, ct/vt checks (burdens, admittance, and demagnetizing cts). Also included is checking for diversions through improperly installed circuits ahead of the instrument transformers and, of course, testing the meter for accuracy. Additionally, the Meter Technician obtains actual onsite meter information that is brought back to the field office and validated by the Meter Clerk against billing system information. Meter Services employees use annual pulse verification checks, meter diagnostic software and remote interrogation techniques to check for problems in between site visits.

CMP supports its employees' efforts with an incentive award program that was established in January 1996. Employees that locate and report a verified diversion receive a \$25 bonus, after taxes. Additionally they receive 10% of any settlement revenues over \$250, up to a maximum employee bonus of \$1000 per case.

CMP has a Revenue Protection Committee that oversees the implementation of this program.

*Russ Farwell is the Supervisor of Field Meter & Service at Central Main Power. He has been in the utility industry for 35 years and is the current 2005 NURPA chairman.*



Russ Farwell

## 2005 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE - SURPA/SCRPA

It is time to set your plans to attend our 2005 International Conference, which is scheduled for June 14th - 17th. This year's conference will be held at the Caribe Royale in Orlando, Florida.

The 2005 planning committee worked hard and came up with some very interesting speakers and demonstrations. Please visit [www.iurpa.com](http://www.iurpa.com) for conference information.

The Caribe Royale is an all suite resort and room rates start at \$119.000 per night. The rate will be honored 3 days prior and 3 days following the conference. To insure space and room rate availability, reservations should be made by May 16, 2005. Please ask for the SURPA/SCRPA Revenue Protection Conference rate.

If you have any items to donate for the gift bags please indicate them on the registration form. All contributions will be appreciated.

In situations where one check is being sent for a group please send a registration form for each participant.

Early registration for the conference is \$175.00, after May 16, 2005 the registration will be \$200.00.

### REGISTRATION FORM 2005 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE SURPA/SCRPA JUNE 14TH - 17TH

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[kelly.thomas@pgnmail.com](mailto:kelly.thomas@pgnmail.com)



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**Sargent at Arms - Donna Honsberger**  
Gainesville Regional Utilities  
Gainesville, FL  
Phone: (352) 334-3400  
[honsbergedl@gru.com](mailto:honsbergedl@gru.com)



**President - Greg Lee**  
Georgia Power Company  
Atlanta, GA  
Phone: (404) 506-1864  
[gnlee@southernco.com](mailto:gnlee@southernco.com)



**Vice President - Kyle Dick**  
San Marcos Electric Utility  
San Marcos, TX  
Phone: (512) 393-8309  
[dicke\\_kyle@ci.san-marcos.tx.us](mailto:dicke_kyle@ci.san-marcos.tx.us)



**Vice President - Mike McQueen**  
Mississippi Power  
Hattiesburg, MS  
Phone: (601) 545-4199  
[mlmcquee@southernco.com](mailto:mlmcquee@southernco.com)



**Treasurer - Altee Hicks**  
S. Carolina Elec. & Gas  
Aiken, GA  
Phone: (803) 642-6253  
[ahicks@scana.com](mailto:ahicks@scana.com)

**T. Lynn Smith**  
Gulf Power, Pensacola, FL 32520  
Phone: (850) 444-6263  
[tulsmith@southernco.com](mailto:tulsmith@southernco.com)

**Jeanne Hedrick**  
Entergy Corp., Jefferson, LA 70121  
Phone: (504) 840-2704  
[jhedrick@entergy.com](mailto:jhedrick@entergy.com)

**Richard Powajbo**  
Entergy Corp., Jefferson, LA 70121  
Phone: (504) 840-2652  
[rpowajb@entergy.com](mailto:rpowajb@entergy.com)

SURPA OFFICERS

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## REVENUE PROTECTION – A SCOTTISH POWER PERSPECTIVE

By IAN MAIN • REVENUE MANAGEMENT OFFICER, SCOTTISH POWER

When I took over my current role managing the Revenue Protection Service for Scottish Power I, like others, naively thought that energy theft "only happens to us". However, through my relationship with colleagues within the Revenue Protection Industry in the UK and beyond, I have quickly realised that not only does it affect the UK; energy theft is a serious global issue.

Eighteen months down the line, I am delighted to take this opportunity to give an insight into how my company tackles energy theft and also of the relationships I have built up with my colleagues in PacifiCorp and within the United Kingdom Revenue Protection Association (UKRPA) who have close links to your association.

Scottish Power is one of the largest utility companies in the UK with over 5 million customers throughout the country. Recent study suggests that we lose in the region of £30million per annum attributable to gas and electricity theft. In an attempt to combat this we employ a team of 29 Revenue Protection staff who are highly trained, dedicated professionals with the aim of preventing, detecting and investigating the illegal abstraction of gas and electricity. Our team has 8 clerical staff who receives leads from various sources, mainly meter readers, as well as scrutinising billing records to analyse consumption patterns. Where they feel an investigation is justified a job will be raised for our field staff, operating in 2 man teams, to carry out a visit to the property, either commercial or domestic, to conduct a full inspection. Our staff carries out around 14,000 inspections per annum, with meter interference detected at just over 50% of those visited. The type of interference found ranges from the crudest forms of vandalism to the very intricate by-pass with no damage visible. A decision will be taken at each individual call, based on type of premise and previous history whether the supply should be disconnected or equipment rectified. In some case we will prosecute however these instances are low, which some of you may find surprising, as these are found to be costly with little support from the authorities.

All meter interference constitutes a serious safety risk to the customer, occupants of the house, neighbours and any contractors working in the property. We continually carry out safety presentations to not only our own employees, but to the emergency services and all other interested parties in our custom built Visitor Centre (crudely nicknamed the Black Museum). We try to publicise what we do as much as possible as we see this as a deterrent if people are aware of the dangers and we have featured on TV and radio in recent months spreading the word.

Scottish Power works closely with our colleagues in PacifiCorp and my counterpart, Ray Croft, and I have shared our working methods and processes which has enabled us in some instances to adopt best practice across both sides of the company. I look forward to continuing this relationship and building up our knowledge of how each side operates.



Ian Main

Scottish Power is also actively involved within the UKRPA of which I am part of the Executive Committee. At our recent conference, we were delighted and honoured to receive a presentation from Kurt Roussel who gave a fascinating insight into energy theft in the US. We were also represented at IURPA conference in Las Vegas last summer and will certainly be sending someone along again this year to your conference in June. The UKRPA is continually developing and we will be launching our revamped web site in early spring and we would be delighted to hear from you at [www.ukrpa.co.uk](http://www.ukrpa.co.uk)

In conclusion, although our job can be very frustrating, it is also very rewarding in knowing we all provide a unique and vital service. At times it is comforting to know that we are not alone and all share common problems and goals. Keep up the good fight and very best wishes.

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## ‘A GOOD SEAL BLESSES EVERYTHING’

### A good meter seal program provides a number of safety and financial benefits

BY STEVEN RIOS, STRATEGIC MARKETING DIRECTOR, BROOKS SECURITY PRODUCTS, AND  
PHIL DUDLEY, NATIONAL SALES MANAGER, BROOKS UTILITY PRODUCTS GROUP

A seal on your utility meter is only designed to keep honest people honest. If someone truly wants to tamper with the meter, he or she will. Despite that, a sealing program is still crucial to your operation because security seals alone effectively protect 90% of meter installations.

There are a number of safety and control benefits, not to mention benefits for automatic meter reading deployment and compliance with the Sarbanes-Oxley Act.

#### Safety

"We have a meter sealing program primarily because of public safety – for our employees and customers," explained John Culwell, security section leader for Arizona Public Service, Phoenix. "If someone gets into a meter, it can leave the service in disarray. If there's no evidence of tampering, then our people could get hurt."

Kurt Roussell, coordinator for revenue protection at WE Energies, Milwaukee, and IURPA chairman, says his company uses a detailed color-coded meter seal system. Each color-coded meter seal indicates a classification, such as good-paying customer; if a contractor was the last person at the meter; if the customer has a history of tampering with the meter; if the customer has life-support equipment inside; and other classifications.

"Our people are actively looking for any meter with a damaged seal," Roussell said.

#### Control

Another key feature of a meter seal program is the ability for seal inventory control and tracking. Before today's self-locking seals were widely used, meters were sealed with lead seals and the field person had to use a small hand press to seal them. When each seal was sealed, the workman essentially signed his work.

That level of traceability has been lost.

However, with bar coding technology, that traceability can return.

United Illuminating, New Haven, Conn., has used bar-coded seals since it started its AMR deployment four years ago.

"By having unique bar codes on each seal, and scanning them each time they are used, we keep a database of when and where each seal was installed, and who used it," explained George Balsamo, meter security manager. "That capability provides a tremendous benefit in tracking and keeping an eye on our seal inventory, and letting us know when meters have been touched, and by whom."

#### What makes a good seal?

During a recent security roundtable discussion about meter sealing, Michael Szilvagy, supervisor of energy theft for DTE Energy, Detroit, commented that, "A good seal blesses everything."

A meter seal program is truly only as good as its seals. Here are seven qualities of a good seal:

1. Tamper evident: Any damage to the seal should be easy to spot.

2. Tamper deterrent: Users should not be able to use any type of tool to open the seal without leaving visible or other evidence.

3. Long field life: Seals should be able to be deployed for their expected useful life without degradation from ultra violet rays, moisture, and changes in temperature.

4. Capable of using latest seal technology. Examples include bar coding, and, in the near future, RFID (radio frequency identification), as well as product design.

5. Can be tracked, such as using bar code or other tracking means.

6. Good value: Offers the features described above at a reasonable and fair price.

7. From a reputable manufacturer:

A company that is known in the industry with a long, proven reputation for dependability and reliability.

#### AMR, SOX and other benefits

A good meter seal program also has benefits in an AMR system. An AMR system reduces the frequency of when meters are seen by utility employees. Therefore, when AMR meters are installed, it is important to reseal them with seals that have the above qualities.

Roussell explained WE Energies' approach: "Our program includes an annual inspection of each AMR meter to manually check the installation, from pole to the house to ensure the meter is secure and safe."

A secure meter also plays an important role in public utilities' Sarbanes-Oxley Act compliance, particularly with Section 404. Section 404 of the SOX Act puts the ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of a company's annual financial report on the top executive.

"By having a good sealing program, we demonstrate that we are putting our 'cash registers' (i.e., meters) in the best possible environment in protecting cash flow," explained APS's Culwell.

The SOX Act calls for accountability and tracking in how businesses operate. Utilities can help themselves in a couple areas to be in SOX compliance: 1) by having an auditing or tracking system for their seals, and, 2) by using quality seals on their meters to deter energy theft.

DTE's Szilvagy said the tamper evident feature on his seals helped prove a recent energy theft case.

"There were minute, but still tell-tale signs that the meter seal was broken," Szilvagy explained. "Our people in the



Steven Rios

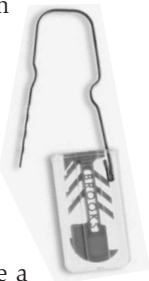


field are well trained to look for any fine detail on seals."

DTE uses seals for its two million electric and one million gas meter installations, as well as at transformer stations and with CT cabinets.

If there is no way to track seals, then inventory cannot be tracked, and meter security can be compromised.

Note that just using locking devices can provide a false sense of security because an employee or customer could get a hold of a master key, access the meter and then re-



secure it with little chance of detection. With a quality, tamper evident and deterrent seal, once it is broken it's nearly impossible to re-seal the meter without leaving visible evidence. Also, with a seal tracking program, utilities can verify if a certain seal is supposed to be on a particular meter, or if it has been wrongly used on a meter.

You can be assured of your meter security through the seals' quality and capabilities it offers, and the program that controls and tracks them. With those key items in place, you can be sure that, "a good seal blesses everything."

## IURPA – 2005 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

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**Note:** Credit card payments may be made directly from the IURPA website. Please go to: [www.IRUPA.org](http://www.IRUPA.org)

**Annual dues are \$50 (US) per member. Payments may be made by check or credit card. Please send form along with your payment.**

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**2005 NORTHEAST UTILITIES REVENUE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION  
FALL CONFERENCE & TRAINING SEMINAR**

The 2005 Northeast Utilities Revenue Protection Association Fall Conference and Training Seminar will be held September 14, 15 & 16 at the Queensbury Hotel, 88 Ridge St., Glens Falls, New York. Our intention this year is to provide valuable information that universally applies to all supervisors, managers, directors and field personnel in the utility industry. We feel the topics that will be presented should interest all utility groups.

Registration is \$225 inclusive with meals. Additional guest meal package is available for \$200. Room reservations are \$79 per night prior to August 1st and upon availability thereafter. Please contact the hotel directly (518) 792-1121. Please mention "NURPA" at the time of registration to ensure room availability.

Should you wish to spend additional time in the Lake George area, either the weekend before or the weekend after conference the hotel will honor the special room rate of \$79.00 per night. There will be no extra room charge for your guest. In order to provide the hotel with attendee information it is important that you to schedule your time and make both hotel and conference registrations by August 1st.

We STRONGLY advise that you register early as the hotel sold out last year and rooms were unavailable.

A golf outing is planned on the Tuesday before the conference for those who wish to arrive early. For further information please contact Bob Huckemeyer at: huckemeyerr@coned.com. Information for this year's conference can be found on the IURPA web site at www.iurpa.org . Updates will appear as well along with all the necessary forms for registration.

Information about the Lake George area may be found on the internet at a variety of sites including:

www.visitlakegeorge.com

www.lakegeorge.com

www.lakegeorge.net

We hope to see you there.....



**Chairman - Russell Farwell**  
Central Maine Power Co. • Lewiston, ME  
Phone: (207) 753-3113  
Fax: (207) 753-3648  
Russell.Farwell@CMPCO.com



**Vice-Chairman - Craig Bialy**  
Northeast Utilities  
Berlin, CT  
Phone: (860) 665-6930  
bialycr@nu.com



**Secretary - Patricia Uhlman**  
NSTAR Electric & Gas Corporation  
Westwood, MA  
Phone: (781) 441-8245  
patricia\_uhlman@nstaronline.com



**Treasurer - Carol Speck**  
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## 2005 MIDWEST ENERGY THEFT ASSOCIATION

By Kurt W. Roussell, Acting President

As previously announced, the Midwest Energy Theft Association (META) will not hold a conference this year due to several unexpected departures of several officers leaving the industry to move on to greener pastures.

Last year, the Officers of the Association were in the midst of planning for the 2005 conference. Planning on leaping forward on the momentum of the highly successful conference in Kansas City, there was one major obstacle. Where to have it? We were unsuccessful in finding a host utility and a venue.

Hosting conferences and all of the planning is an exhaustive, time consuming endeavor, and we couldn't find volunteers. I'm pleased to announce we do have a host utility for 2006, but we knew there was not enough time left to set one up for this year.

So we asked ourselves "what can we do this year?" The remaining Officers agreed to move forward with our plan to enhance the information available to Revenue Protection professionals in the Midwest via the internet.

This summer, a questionnaire will be sent to every Revenue Protection professional in the Midwest (that we know about) to gather information for the website. Our goal is to design a One Stop Shop for our members. The website will house information and links to information including, utilities in the state, RP professionals email addresses, links to state public service commission rules and regulations, state criminal laws, government based property ownership information, etc.

We are also looking for motivated individuals who desire to participate in moving the organization forward. If you're interested, please contact Jeff Harris at Missouri Gas Energy or myself.



**Acting President - Kurt Roussell**  
We Energies  
Milwaukee, WI  
Phone: (414) 221-3634  
kurl.roussell@we-energies.com



**Treasurer - Patrick Flynn**  
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Phone: (312) 394-8092  
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## THE OL' WATERING HOLE

BY JEFF HARRIS • MISSOURI GAS ENERGY

Welcome to "The Ol' Watering Hole". You know the kind of place, where you can get together with friends and co-workers and trade the old "war stories". So pull up a stool, pour yourself one of your favorite frosty cold or steaming hot beverages, and enjoy.

I'm proposing that this become a regular section of the Newsletter – provided that there is enough interest and participation. A place for all of you "old salts" to share some of your serious, humorous, or just plain memorable experiences with everyone. Heck, we may even get an idea or learn something from each other in the process!

I'll get us started with a short one, and then ask that you put pen to paper, or should I say fingers to keyboard, and send me one of your experiences that you wouldn't mind sharing with everyone. I'll organize them and submit them for publication in the Newsletter.

In February 2005, I decided to drive by an address where inactive consumption had been discovered the week before. We had no current, or even recent, customer there, so the gas was shut off and the meter locked at that time. Upon my arrival, I found that the lock had been broken off, and the gas turned back on illegally. I knocked on the door, in an attempt to identify the current residents, and was "greeted" by two small faces in the front plate glass window. The two kids, who appeared to be about three and five years of age, stayed there only long enough to say that there were no parents

there. Being the conscientious, civic-minded, good Samaritan (you get the drift) type, I called the Police and requested that they check the welfare of the children. After the Police arrived, they spent a good thirty minutes knocking on various doors and windows and attempting to make contact with anyone inside the residence. When all of their efforts had failed, they decided to make forced entry to take the children into protective custody. Upon kicking in the front door, they found "Mom" huddled down in the dining room with the kids. When asked why she didn't open the door or at least respond to them, she stated, "Cause I knew the gas was on illegally." They explained to her why the door was kicked in and, since we were already there, signed her up for Tampering/Theft of Service.

If she only knew that had she made any type of verbal contact showing that there was adult supervision present (even if she refused to open the door), our only recourse at that time would have been to leave. I like to call this story "The time the system beat the criminal".

If you have a story that you would like to share, please type it up and e-mail it to me at [jeharris@mgemail.com](mailto:jeharris@mgemail.com).



Jeff Harris

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## COMMUNICATION IS KEY

BY BILLY GAULT • REVENUE PROTECTION INVESTIGATOR, GAINESVILLE REGIONAL UTILITIES

**M**y name is Billy Gault and I have worked with Gainesville Regional Utilities for about ten years. I have worked as a Revenue Protection Investigator for about three years. During this time my department has established a great repore with local law enforcement as well as the State Attorney's office. I have development and administered training to all law enforcement personnel to ensure consistency as it relates to prosecuting utility theft. Open communication amongst your jurisdictional law enforcement is crucial; moreover, it can be an extension of your eyes and ears.

This great communication paid off one day when local law enforcement was actively engaged in a drug investigation or as we relate to them "drug bust". GRU received an urgent call from the local Sheriffs Department that a suspect, who had been detained for an illegal grow operation, had admitted to paying a guy from the Daytona Beach, Florida area \$400.00 to reduce his light bill. It is not uncommon for defendants who engaged in illegal grow operations to divert their electricity. High consumption registered on an electric meter is one of the most valuable tips to law enforcement of a potential indoor grow operation.

Upon arrival my co-partner and I were greeted by several deputies and DEA agents. Inspection of the electric meter revealed small pry marks near the top of the meter can. The

seal was in tact, which bypassed the monthly inspection administered by the meter readers. Further inspection of the electric meter discovered a missing base seal and a foreign object, possibly a resistor, which was connected to the internal wire of the meter. I would have to admit, that this foreign wire puzzled me and it was not immediately identifiable.



Billy Gault

The meter was photographed and collected for evidence. The meter was then turned over to GRU's meter shop for extensive testing. After extensive testing by meter shop personnel, the meter was found to be operating faster than slower. Go figure! The foreign object was taken to several technical shops and was never identified. The investigation determined that the suspect actually paid more for his utility bill than what he should have.

In conclusion, the suspect paid \$400.00 just so he could pay more for his utility bill. We don't recommend customers tamper with their meter primarily for safety reasons; however, if they choose to, the additional revenue is always a plus. The defendant was only billed for investigation time and labor that was spent on meter testing. The defendant is still awaiting on his refund check, NOT!



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**IURPA • 15 Years**

The International Utilities Revenue Protection Association was founded in 1990 to protect member utility companies worldwide from revenue losses associated with unauthorized use of service. In fifteen years, the organization has grown from a small regional group into an association that includes representatives of more than 400 utility companies around the world.

**IURPA Officers**



**Chairperson - Kurt Roussell**  
 Wisconsin Electric Power Co.  
 Milwaukee, WI 53203  
 Phone: (414) 221-3634  
 Fax: (414) 221-2214  
 kurt.roussell@we-energies.com



**Secretary - Jeff Cornelius**  
 Peace River Electric Co-op  
 Wauchula, FL 33873  
 Phone: (941) 722-2729  
 Fax: (941) 722-5837  
 corneliusj@warner.edu



**1st Vice-Chairperson - Kent Manning**  
 Southern California Edison  
 Menifee, CA 92585  
 Phone: 909-928-8225  
 Fax: 909-925-8325  
 Manninkj@sce.com



**Treasurer Raymond Croft**  
 Pacificorp  
 Portland, OR 97232  
 Phone: 503-813-6601  
 Fax: 503-813-6200  
 Ray.Croft@PacifiCorp.com

Please send all correspondence to:  
 IURPA Publishing Team  
 Brody Printing Company  
 265 Central Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06607  
 phone 203 384-9313 • fax: 203 336-0871  
 e-mail: ernie@brodyprinting.com

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