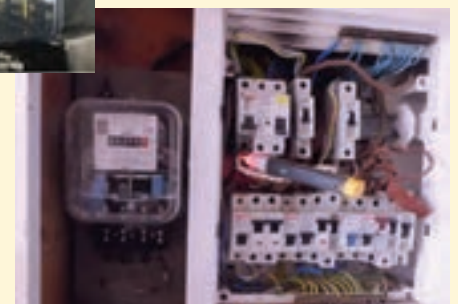
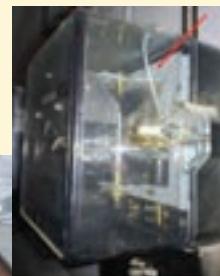
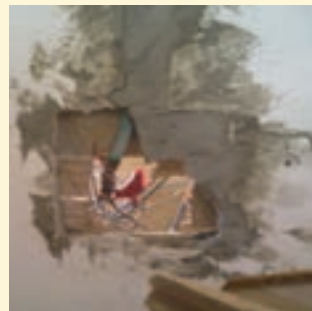


INTERNATIONAL UTILITIES REVENUE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

I U R P A
INC.

Volume 22 Issue 1

APRIL 2012



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From the Chairman

I would like to begin by thanking the IURPA board and IURPA members for giving me the opportunity and honor of serving as the Chairperson of IURPA. I would like to introduce myself to those of you who may not know me by giving you a short overview of the company whom I work for and a small part of my journey that has brought me to the Revenue Protection/Assurance side of the utility business.



Pal Uhlman
IURPA Chairman

reading on scan sheets) and went on to being a field person within our collection department and then to a supervisory capacity. One day a job posting was brought to my attention for an investigator in our expanding Revenue Protection Department. I applied and the rest is history as they say!

Some parts of the world deal with theft for greed reasons and other parts of the world deal with desperation theft of service.

I have worked for NSTAR Electric and Gas Corporation for 39 years, exclusively in Revenue Protection for the past 19 years. NSTAR is an investor owned electric and gas utility company with its headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts and a customer base of 1.4 million. Our service territory covers a diverse population living everywhere from large cities such as Boston and Worcester to older factory cities that have reinvented themselves when manufacturing left the area, and everything in between. NSTAR service territory is a mix of Fortune 500 Companies, world class universities and hospitals, farms and small shops, tourist hot spots, some of the best beaches in the United States and the towns and businesses that make Massachusetts such a great place to live and work.

I started at NSTAR (Cape and Vineyard Electric) reading meters (back in the day when you actually read the meter and marked the

I trained on the job and attended any training programs and seminars that I could get approval to attend. I went to Electric Meter Schools, Gas Operations Schools, Gas Measurement programs and talked and talked (but mostly listened) to the experts in their field. One of my early mentors told me that it was important to know how a gas or electric service looked when it was working correctly in order to be able to recognize when something was wrong.

One of the training programs I attended was a NURPA Conference. I had never been at a meeting with so many Revenue Protection Professionals in one place and I met some of the icons of the industry including Ed Holmes, the founding father of IURPA. I cannot even begin to thank those at my first meeting who shared their knowledge and love of this business with me.

I want to encourage all of you to network with the professionals that attend the IURPA and regional meetings around the world. I cannot tell you how much I have learned listening to people in our business. Some parts of the world deal with theft for greed reasons and other parts of the world deal with desperation theft of service. I have heard stories of dangerous theft situations that have left children dead because they have stepped on the live conductors lying on the ground illegally supplying power to parts of an isolated village. We all have heard about gas explosions caused by someone trying to steal gas that destroys multiple homes or someone making an illegal water hook up to avoid paying for water therefore contaminating a public water supply to thousands of people. We can all tell story after story and that what is so great about meeting as a group of professionals with the common goal of finding and correcting conditions caused by theft and other unsafe acts that result in the loss of energy and water.

There is another group that I need to encourage everyone to network with and to listen to: the new professionals that have joined IURPA and the regional groups around the world. They are the future of our business. The networking done at the conferences and training seminars will bring new ideas and wise knowledge together to expand our ability to discover the unsafe and dangerous conditions in the field. The analysts that some of our companies are now utilizing to mine the massive amounts of data that our metering gives us on a monthly, daily or real time basis are the ones to talk to about what to do with all that information in a practical and controllable manner. I have been recharged and inspired by listening to someone new in this industry that sees it all with a fresh outlook.

So mark your calendars for the 2012 IURPA/SCRPA/SURPA Training Seminar June 12-15 in New Orleans, Louisiana. The board members and vendors are working to put together a first class conference and you will not be disappointed if you attend. Check the IURPA web site for the announcements about the upcoming IURPA and regional meetings. By attending you will discover the excitement of meeting some of the finest people from all over the world. See you soon!

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“MUTUAL AID”

By DAVID WHIDDEN, REVENUE PROTECTION SUPERVISOR, THE UNITED ILLUMINATING COMPANY

It's been a strange year here in the Northeast. It's not that we're not used to having events like Hurricanes, Floods and early Fall Nor'easters with record early season snow but to be fair, we've enjoyed a break for close to 10 years. Sure we've had a few blips like a small tornado here in downtown Bridgeport but really nothing catastrophic that caused a public outcry and a media bonanza like we've experienced of late. It takes a lot of hard work and perseverance to deal with one event let alone two back to back. If the rest of the utilities hit by these events are like United Illuminating we're learning some hard lessons. Like the fact that a great percentage of our workforce has come on board since the last major event and for many of them this was their first experience dealing with major catastrophic outages and storm restoration. The industry was worried some years ago about combating the anticipated knowledge drain when utility workers (and all baby boomers for that matter) began to retire. Things come in cycles and there really isn't a lot you can do other than plan, practice and keep your fingers crossed. In the Revenue Protection field we've come to learn that events like this usually bring an influx in work for the department. Reports of unmetered connections, foreign seals found on meters, locks that are mysteriously opened or cut without record, damage to meters. The list goes on and on and if we're lucky we'll also discover some genuine theft along the way. It's a welcome break from our new daily challenge of combating fraud.



David Whidden

Mutual aid is the term often used to mean that a utility has an agreement with its fellow surrounding utilities that in the event of one of these catastrophic events they can expect help. Help as in “The Marines”! Usually it's been my experience that the people that show up are nothing but the best of the best. I've made some good friends along the way and still get Christmas cards from a few. It's mutual aid time here for Revenue Protection! Our industry is under assault like never before from people that are trying to obtain our services by any means possible. It's vital that we all step up and help! Be an active part of IURPA and your regional groups. I don't mean pay your dues and read the newsletter but get involved. If you're fortunate enough to enjoy the support of your management then take the ball and run with it. Don't wait to be invited, ask if you can help.

Now let's talk about the Revenue Protection Marines that respond to your call for aid. You can expect the likes of Itzick Michaeli who travels to South Africa to make a presentation and ends up giving the Key Note address. He made the best of it and got to spin his speech with a good friend over slices of South African Biltong. He didn't get to do the sight seeing he'd planned for the day but he stepped up and helped out. It's Jan Arendsen and Frans Provoost taking the time to share their findings on Marijuana grows with the rest of us. It's Wayne Wohler and Gary Signorelli contributing an article but remembering to remind us all that Safety comes first. There are more than I can name and every one of them is a professional. The Marines of Revenue

Protection. One day soon we need to tabulate how many collective years of service in the Revenue Protection field we have associated with IURPA. I'm sure that it's well over 1,000.

I've been doing this job since 1990 and I recently encountered a first. I was proud to be part of what I like to call a Trifecta, theft of electric, gas and water. What brought about this significant event? Mutual aid. The gas company tipped us off that they were in a restaurant basement and that something didn't appear right and we might want to investigate a.s.a.p. They also asked me to pass along the tip to the water company because it appeared that the restaurant appeared was using unmetered water as well. The gas company investigator could have just concerned himself with his own product and turned a blind eye to the other things that were going on but he couldn't do it. Why? He's a brother Revenuer just like you and I. Electric, gas, water, we're all in it together and we certainly share the same client base so let's remember to work together. Encourage your fellow utility Investigators to give mutual aid. Encourage each other to step up and be a contributing member of IURPA and the regional groups. The more the merrier. It's time to hit the beaches Marines!

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2012 NURPA FALL CONFERENCE & TRAINING SEMINAR

Date: September 19, 20 & 21
 Location: Queensbury Hotel, 88 Ridge St., Glens Falls, NY
 1-518-792-1121
 Room Rate: \$99 per night before Aug. 19
 Upon availability after Aug. 19
 Registration: \$200 - Meal Package is included.

Registration will be on
 Wednesday, Sept. 19th from 1:00 - 4:00 pm
 with the vendor products and services display
 from 4:00 - 6:00 pm.

Please note that in order to provide the hotel the needed
 information both registration AND conference fee must be in by
 August 19th.

A formal agenda will be posted in the NURPA section of the IURPA
 website as soon as it is available.

Room reservations are to be made directly to
 the Queensbury Hotel at (518) 792-1121.

****PLEASE MENTION "NURPA" AT THE TIME OF
 REGISTRATION TO ENSURE ROOM AVAILABILITY****



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“LESSONS LEARNED ALONG THE WAY DURING OUR AMI DEPLOYMENT”

BY SANDY PERREAULT AND GARY BIESADECKI, SENIOR INVESTIGATORS, THE UNITED ILLUMINATING COMPANY

The AMI meter deployment at UI began in late June of 2010. Training classes were set up in advance of the deployment to prepare the workforce for a variety of installations that they may encounter daily. This class included photos of various meter provisions and a prioritized list of the best locking devices to use for each occurrence. In addition, the class also offered a refresher on the methods used to properly test the voltage as well as different signs of tampering and what to look for before locking each installation. The techs were also made aware of the importance of the security of the meter and installation. The installation of the AMI meter (along with its capabilities) translated to fewer field visits so proper locking procedures were essential.

The lesson learned here was measure twice and cut once.

As the project began the first problem that was encountered involved a small variation in the size and configuration of the new meter cover from the old meter covers. These changes made the installation of the heavy duty ring very difficult and time consuming. After a lot of investigation it was discovered that while the lock manufacturer was to spec the meter manufacturer was not!? Contact was made with the meter manufacturer and they were advised that they needed to adhere to the tolerances which had been used previously (which would allow for easier installation on all future meter shipments). In addition, we requested that they supply replacement covers for all meters still in stock. Once the replacement covers were received the covers on all in stock meters were replaced. It was decided that the meters that had already been installed would be left as is unless future meter work was performed and then the cover would be replaced at that time. The lesson learned here was measure twice and cut once. Make sure that the locks you use are a good fit with the meters you choose. All parts of the equation should be tested long before they reach the hands of your meter technicians.

It was our decision to lock all ringless boxes, abase meter provisions and service panel covers with what we refer to as box locks. We currently use two different types of box locks. One is designed with a hand tightening clamp and the second version involves punching a hole in the meter provision to secure the box lock. The first box lock saved a lot of time but could only be used on ringless boxes and service panels that had a flanged edge so the clamp could get a good “bite” onto the box. Available room inside the box as well as positioning of the conductors also became a factor because of the size of the handle on the clamp. The Abase provisions in particular

did better with the style of box lock that required a hole to be punched into the box because of the lack of room. The box lock we chose incorporated a device that allowed us to adjust the lock plate to the face of the box. We also were able to purchase a smaller hole-punch for the flangeless boxes (like abases and banjo boxes) that accommodated the lack of space to work in. The investment in these punches was well worth it for the ability to fit into tight places. It made it easier and faster for the tech to install the proper box lock thereby providing the highest level of security. It should be noted that we had to use several different manufacturers to achieve the desired end result.

Another security issue that came up was the placement of the box locks. In one instance a punch less lock was installed on the side of a ringless meter provision and the meter was eventually disconnected. In an effort to gain access to the inside of the provision an unidentified party was able to bang the lock upwards to the top of the cover which allowed them to open the cover without ever removing the lock. They tried to reconnect themselves and replace the cover. The lock was then forced back down the side of the box back to its original spot with the lock and seal in place. The end result was that the lock and seal appeared untouched. Moving forward we tried to make sure that the box locks were installed on the bottom of the provisions and towards the middle of the provision so that they can not be forced up to the top. Installing them low and to the middle also makes it harder for the customers to pry the cover off. If you want to insure that the lock stays in its’ intended location it’s better to use a box lock that requires a hole to be punched. Even this approach isn’t a guaranteed lock (pardon the pun) because the tech must pay attention to knockout locations which can compromise the security of the lock.

The AMI deployment has been a learning experience for all of us. Communication between the workforce and management is very important to keeping your installation numbers on target and maintaining consistency within the workforce. This can be accomplished by quickly identifying the unforeseen challenges that present themselves daily once the deployment is in progress. Once identified, you can communicate fixes and desired approaches through the use of daily tailboard meetings. Revenue protection Investigators were used to assist with difficult to access locations and they also performed field audits to verify the accuracy and security of each location where installations had occurred. If needed, adjustments can then be made to ensure all goals are attained. The end result was 85,000 meters were installed and secured and as you read this they are bringing joy, increased revenue, savings and looks of puzzlement to the faces of players who are suddenly plunged into the darkness all over our service territory.



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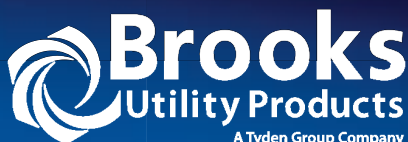
Available in several key lock combinations in either corrosion resistant stainless steel, or plated and hardened carbon steel, the Click Ring provides durability and resistance to a variety of physical attacks.

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WHERE DOES META GO FROM HERE?

By Kurt Roussell, Chairman Emeritus

The Midwest Energy Theft Association (META) has reached a significant crossroad in its storied history. For several years, a small but dedicated group of people have struggled to keep the organization alive. There have been several failed attempts to host a conference in the Midwest, and each attempt had to be cancelled due to lack of participation. Countless hours have been spent trying to spark an interest in the organization, and it's quite disheartening (and expensive) to have to cancel.

Who would like to help? We need your help and support.

Jeffrey Meyer, Team Leader, Revenue Protection, of We Energies, retired from service on January 31st, and I wish him all of the best. I had the pleasure of hiring and working with Jeff and watching him progress through his career. And as many of you know, when I got ill in 2007, Jeff stepped up to the plate, and took the lead in running the department in my absence. The organization met all of its goals under his tutelage, and he kept us afloat until my return. Jeff, along with Jeff Harris (previously with Missouri Gas Energy), also kept META afloat. They recruited Paul Unruh of ComEd, Frank Sintich of Integrys, and Rich Brennan of Inner-tite, took his usual lead in creating a joint conference with the National Association of Credit Managers. That conference was a rousing success. That was in 2007. In 2008, META partnered with IURPA in Kansas City and also enjoyed a wonderful conference.

Since then, there have been attempts at having a conference, and each one has failed. The reasons for lack of participation have included, lack of travel dollars, lack of corporate interest, etc. Last year, Jeff and Paul attempted to host a totally free conference, and registration by vendors outnumbered registration of actual conference attendees. What's happening here?

Has Revenue Protection died in the Midwest?

With Jeff Meyer riding off into the sunset, what do we do now? We still have some players, Paul Unruh, Frank Sintich, Rich Brennan, Tommie Gray of Ameren, and myself. We want to put on a conference in 2012. We are committed to the cause. Are you?



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META
OFFICERS

Paul Unruh is now the META Chairman. We need other officers. Please contact me if interested (don't make me recruit you... I will hunt you down!)

Next year would be META's opportunity to host the 2013 IURPA conference. Are you committed? Are you willing to step up to the plate? We need to know...now! Are you willing to be the host utility for 2012? How about 2013? Once again... we need to know NOW!!! If we can't commit to this, META will have to relinquish its spot for 2013 for the IURPA conference, and defer to the next regional group because the planning needs to begin this year. It bothers me terribly to lose this opportunity. It should bother you too!

We have put up an online forum for ALL Revenue Protection professionals (not just limited to the Midwest): www.midwestenergytheftassociation.com. I invite all Rev Pro professionals to register and log-in. This is a place we can communicate online about issues and events of importance to all. I invite you to join in the discussion and planning for a META conference in 2012 and 2013.

Who would like to help? We need your help and support.

If you have any questions, please email me at: Kurt@revprosystems.com

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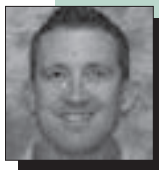
SURPA UPDATE – SPRING 2012

The SURPA Board is excited to announce two new members to our team over the past year, Rick Woods and Eddie Velez. Both gentlemen are tenured professionals in the revenue protection field and will bring great value and diversity to SURPA and it's participating utilities. Please welcome me in joining them and I must say I'm very proud to have such an experienced and eager group of people to work with.

We are also supporting the IURPA and SCRPA groups in planning the joint IURPA/SCRPA/SURPA Conference in New Orleans this year. Planning is well under way and we're excited about the venue, topics of discussion and networking opportunities to come! For those thinking about participating, we're only 3 short months away so please submit your paperwork and payments as soon as possible...you won't want to miss out!

On that note, if you're aware of any revenue protection professionals and/or utilities that haven't previously participated in regional conferences or international group membership, please tell them about the benefits provided by belonging to our groups and forward their contact information to us. We know there are several utilities that haven't been contacted by us and we want to reach out to all of them.

One last thing...the SURPA Board will likely hold an open election at the New Orleans conference as my term as President will have run it's course. At that time all other board members will move up a position and this will leave a vacant Sergeant-At-Arms position as of June. If you or anyone you know are interested, please be prepared to nominate them for this position at the conference. This is a great opportunity to learn from the other board members as we plan conferences and contribute to the efforts that make this great organization a success.



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susan.reinhardt@ggnmail.com

SURPA OFFICERS

2012 IURPA / SCRPA / SURPA CONFERENCE & TRAINING SEMINAR

Date: June 12th – 15th, 2012

Location: Renaissance New Orleans Pere Marquette Hotel,
817 Common Street, New Orleans, LA, 70112-2307

Room Rate: \$129.00 per night before Friday, May 18th.
Upon availability after May 18th

- Room rate will be available 3 days pre & post event (based on availability)
- \$15 parking for attendees
- High Speed Internet Included in Room Rate

Reservations for the event will be made by individual attendees directly with Marriott reservations at 1 (800) 468-3571 or (504) 525-1111 or online at **Renaissance New Orleans Pere Marquette Hotel**.

All reservations must be accompanied by
a first night room deposit or guaranteed with a major credit card.

Registration Fee: \$250.00 by Friday, May 18, 2012.
\$275.00 after May 18th
Additional \$10.00 processing fee for credit card payments.
Contact Altee Hicks at (803) 645-2565

THE METER, THE CUSTOMER, THE ELECTRICITY THEFT AND ALL THE REST

BY ITZICK MICHAELI, REVENUE PROTECTION MANAGER, ISRAEL ELECTRIC CORP.

This event was reported by Lior, Revenue Protection Inspector: One day in March of 2011, a meter reader discovered an alleged illegal use of electricity in an apartment owned by a customer in the city.



Itzick Michaeli

The suspicion of illegal use of electricity arose after the meter was found without a seal and its top cover was assembled backwards. Before the customer arrived at the office, we examined whether the customer had additional contracts in his name, and we found another contract in his name for a minimarket in town.

The customer realized that we were 'on to him', called me outside, hugged me and asked me how much money I wanted to end this story here and now.

Since at the site there was a meter system, a technician was sent from the meters department to check out the site. After the worker examined the meters and found them to be in working order, he asked me to come down to determine whether there was illegal use of electricity in the electrical connection on the site. I arrived at the site, and the customer asked me why I had come. After I answered him that I needed to check the meter, he mentioned that the electric company worker had been there a few days earlier.



I explained that I was required to check since the usage recorded on the meter did not seem reasonable to us! The customer agreed and said: "Check what you want, no problem, but do it quietly, because I'm embarrassed in front of the employees." I checked whether there was illegal use of electricity in the electrical connection to the meter system, and found it to be in working order.

I informed the customer that on the face of things, everything looked in order. Thoroughly relieved, the customer went out of his way and opened a bottle of wine in my honor (it really happened!). We toasted the 'State of Israel, and the soldiers of the IDF (Israel Defense Forces)' and the customer mentioned that he was a law abiding citizen, a patriot and loyal to the State of Israel. His unnatural and overly friendly behavior made me suspicious. I looked at the meter system once again and I noticed a blue threading tube that he

was using, that fed into the system toward the external section of the building, in the direction of the hallway ceiling. I followed the tube and discovered that it fed 2 branching boxes along the ceiling and then entered the minimarket to an additional meter that belonged to another store that was at one time connected and had become part of the minimarket.

I placed an ampere meter pliers at the exit of the meter system and measured an average current flow of 60 amperes for each phase. I took another measurement at the exit point of the meter and the measurement indicated an average current of 15 amperes for each phase. I immediately realized that the input current and the output current were not compatible, which clearly indicates a suspicion of the use of a bypass in order to steal electricity.

Now all that was left was to find the connection point. I informed the customer that I must open up the acoustic ceiling in order to check something, and he answered "No problem honey, do what you have to." I opened the acoustic ceiling and followed the blue threading tube that ran between the branching box and the main safety switches. To my surprise it was intact – which made me crazy!

I went outside and tried to understand what section of the store was parallel to the branching box and I revealed that the output from the branching box was located exactly above the minimarket's cash registers. I asked permission to enter the area of the cash registers. I opened the ceiling there and also found the tube to be intact. I used the flashlight to illuminate the wall and saw a wooden board, where on one side there were 2 hinges and on the other side it was closed with a screw. It was like a little door.

I opened the wooden door, and breathed a sigh of relief... Behind the wooden board, there were two 80- ampere switches, where the line coming from the branching box (25 wires), was cut, and its input side entered the switches through a bridge between them.

One of the outputs continued in the direction of the meter, while the other was fed into a second board that provided electricity to three quarters of the minimarket's area!

When I flipped the switch on the secondary board, all the showcases, freezers, refrigerators and air conditioners stopped working. I notified the customer that I had detected a serious problem. The customer realized that we were 'on to him', called me outside, hugged me and asked me how much money I wanted to end this story here and now.



THE METER, THE CUSTOMER (CONTINUED)



I explained to him, in no uncertain terms, that he was climbing up the wrong tree. The customer asked what would happen now. I explained to him that in the first and immediate stage, I would send a group of experts in connecting electricity to houses, in order to repair the damage and then the problem would be handled using one of the following two alternatives:

1. The Electric Company would issue him a bill for the kw/h that the meter did not record during the period that the electricity was being stolen. He would be asked to come down to the office to pay his debt, and that would end this incident.
2. A complaint would be immediately filed with the police regarding electricity theft and tampering with the electric company's equipment. A criminal file would be opened and at the same time, a civil complaint would be filed for damages, and his electricity would be cut off.

The customer did not hesitate much, and chose the first alternative. I asked him to come to the office as soon as possible and promised that we would reach a settlement with him that would enable him to put an end to the matter and to continue to operate the minimarket.

After some evasion tactics, the customer finally made it to our office. I explained to him that he better close the matter with us and pay the bill we had issued him, which we calculated according to his past consumption averages. I made it clear to him, that if the file was transferred to our headquarters in Tel Aviv, it would most probably be reevaluated in more depth, after examining the electrical equipment found in use at the minimarket, and would take into account the expansion of his business and the addition of electrical equipment over the years. We clarified that after the file left our hands, there would be no turning back.

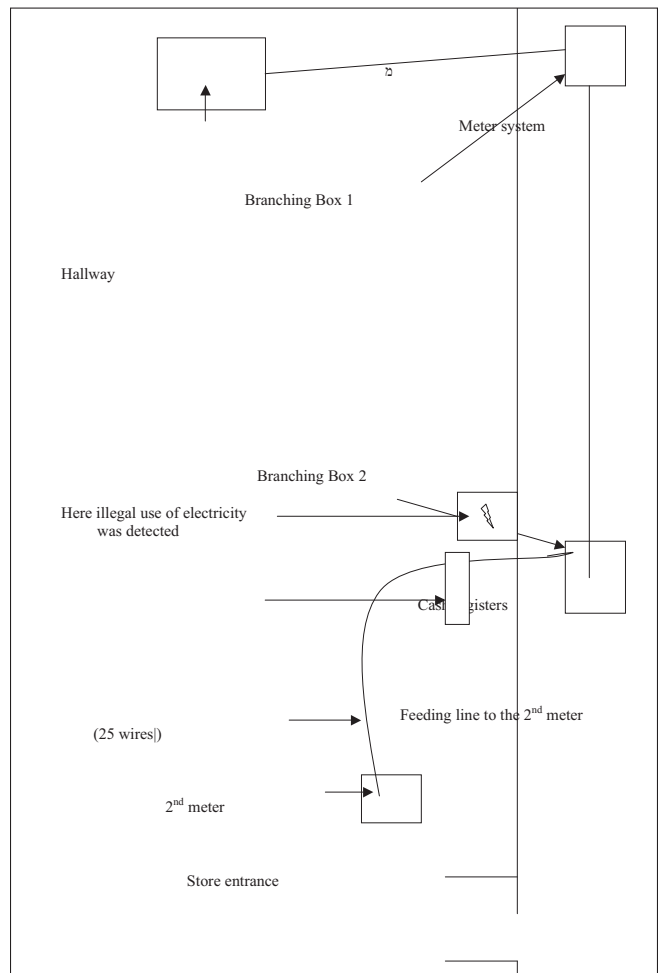
The customer presented a new document, signed by an engineer that had examined the electrical system at the minimarket finding it in perfect condition. We realized that the customer was trying to pull one over on us, and decided to immediately involve the company's security department investigators, who were invited to an additional meeting with the customer. This time, the customer was clearly explained that this was a criminal offense, and payment of the bill that totaled \$170,000, would rescue him from complications with the law.

The customer informed us that he did not have access to such sums of money and that he had no objection to our cutting off his electricity, and he would notify his accountant as of the developments. From our experience, we realized that the customer was trying to buy time.

We filed a complaint against him with the police and transferred the file to be handled by the legal department. In a meeting with the customer and the legal counsel, he was issued a more precise bill, for \$340,000. We were not at all surprised that the police closed the case due to 'a lack of public interest'. The intervention of the company's security department convinced the police to reopen the case.

Monitoring of the minimarket's electrical consumption indicated that the owner was gradually transferring the consumption from the meter that did not record the full usage, to the electrical system that he didn't handle, in order to show that the consumption in the bypassed meter was small. However, the customer just did not take one thing into account - that at the same time, the consumption in the meter was increasing at the exact same rate.

To date, an investigation is underway to assess the customer's ability to pay his debt, and based on the finding, we will decide how to continue in this matter. In the meantime, it was decided that the minimarket would not be cut off from the electrical current, as long as the legal dialogue continues.



THE FUTURE OF DATA ANALYTICS & REVENUE PROTECTION

BY EDDIE FEE, ORLANDO UTILITIES COMMISSION

I recently attended a conference in Orlando, Florida produced by Energy Central called 'Utility Analytics Institute - Summit 2012'. The conference was the first of its kind and I, like many other attendees, wondered how broad or narrow of the utility analytic's scope would be covered. I attended in hopes of understanding more of what the industry frequently refers to as the 'data tsunami' commonly associated with AMI and Smart Meter Grids and the possible benefits to be received. One thing I quickly learned was that my company wasn't alone in feeling overwhelmed with the volume and variances of data coming into our shops and how to best leverage it to our benefit.



Eddie Fee

I witnessed some helpful case studies involving leverage of AMI data for revenue protection functions. Some companies showed success in developing internal analytics tools and reports, while others shared success stories of teaming up with data analytics providers. Many of us in the industry are cautious about using meter data based on widespread and ineffective experiences in using AMR tamper flag data. However, it seems the most successful revenue protection areas keep it simple (at least initially) by only leveraging AMI outage flags against usage and field activity data. For example, they may identify trends for time periods of no meter communication and/or frequent outage flags (during weekends, nights, or off cycle weeks) that could be indicative of 'musical meter' activities by the customer. Another

area to target would be a single outage flag followed by a drop in metered consumption. Once you master these areas, you can use your knowledge of the data to identify more complex situations involving meter tampering or diversion.

Likely the most important thing I learned was that because smart grid and AMI deployments are so robust and complex touching numerous areas of utility operations, the revenue protection functions are a great starting point for one of these massive projects. The 'low hanging fruit' per say, as the experts in our areas we can identify some quick ways to leverage previously un-used AMI data to provide effective leads. Again, the common theme of success is to keep it simple when starting out to gain those 'quick wins' which will show effective use of resources and mitigation of revenue leakages.

Regardless of whether we're ready for the change, this is the future of our industry. Considering the on-going pressures we face to 'do more with less', we must work smarter (not harder) to take this data head-on and find ways to effectively manage it. If your company is already has or is working to develop a data analytics committee, be sure you have appropriate representation. Also, consider reaching out to other utilities and learn from their successes and failures. Start simple in effort to show that the data and personnel resources can be used effectively to meet your department's objectives and goals. In short, be a leader in your company and department by innovating and taking on the tsunami.



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WSUTA CONFERENCE 2012

This year's Western State Utility Theft Association (WSUTA) Conference will be at the Silver Legacy Hotel and Casino located in Reno Nevada. It will be the 20th Anniversary of WSUTA we are planning to make it special and hoping for the best turn out to date. There are many different situations that the Utility Inspectors and Investigators face while in the field so this year's focus at the conference will be on AMI and safety, presentation from the DEA, There will be a presentation on personal safety. There will be one to two certifications this year.

- The conference will begin on Monday October 22nd 2012. With check in and registration. Followed by a Vendor Reception.

- On Tuesday, October 23rd 2012, the conference will begin with several persons from different agencies and organizations speaking on a panel about their experience with The AMI system followed by the popular open discussion on AMI and other hot topics. The vendors will also be giving their presentations on this date.

- Wednesday, October 24th, 2012 there will be a full day presentation from CORE body language this is a certification.

- Thursday, October 25th will be the last day of the conference it will be half day; there will be a presentation on Occupation Dog Bite Prevention Training this will be an interactive class.

For persons interested in attending this conference please contact one of the following persons WSUTA President: Benjamin Griffin, Vice President: Steve Sprague, Secretary: Dana Allen, and Treasurer: Lydia Bentley, or the WSUTA website. We look forward to seeing you there.

GOT WEB SITE SKILLS?

IURPA Director of Web Services Woody Woodward is looking for an apprentice! Due to his age, his lack of knowledge regarding current web page design (something about an old dog and new tricks), and the desire to be sure that the IURPA Web Site stays up if he's down, Woody is looking for help.



Woody Woodward

The plan is to bring an "apprentice" on board and work him/her into the design and maintenance of the Web Site. At some point this will most likely include a redesign / update of the Web Site. Updates regarding conferences, regional group officers & etc. are periodically needed. Initially, Woody plans to supervise the web site and continue to handle the regular email duties. Should something happen to Woody, the "apprentice" would be expected to be able to step in.

If you think you have the skills you probably do. Woody is still using a text editor and simple html programming.....

Please consider volunteering your time in the rewarding pursuit of the advancement of skills and knowledge in the Revenue Protection field.

Anyone interested should email woody @ webmaster@iurpa.com



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GAMBLE PAYS OFF FOR PGE

BY BY STEVE SPRAGUE, PORTLAND GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY

Recently we have been tracking a group of large scale marijuana grows that are stealing power from Portland General Electric; because they are grow operations and because they are part of the organized crime world we needed to involve law enforcement to assist in the investigation. Soon, we had a train of vehicles, cameras mounted on poles and much more going on as a result of this large scale investigation. One of the grow houses that we had already verified as a theft and had been monitoring, began to have problems. Before we knew it, the grow vanished along with the unmetered usage.

The lesson here is to do your homework, weigh the options, make a decision, and then cross your fingers.

We had assisted the Portland Police in several other search warrants that had evidently made the individuals running this operation too nervous. So we waited a while to let things settle down and sure enough, several months later, we verified the grow operation was up and running again. We reported it to law enforcement and began the waiting and monitoring process. One morning, I got a report that a line crew had responded to a blown transformer in the middle of the night which they replaced with a 25 KVA transformer. The crew had checked the kWh usage on everyone off the transformer and at that time they appeared to be fine. As a result, the job was closed.

A few days later the new 25 KVA transformer blew. When I was notified the following morning, I was able to explain why we were having trouble with the transformers and that we were monitoring a large marijuana grow. At that point I realized that we had a problem. On the one hand, we can't keep having our other customers continually losing their power but on the other hand I don't want this grow operation getting spooked and taking off again.

I know that the individual responsible for the grow operation doesn't live in the house, but I am concerned that he may find out that we are watching him as a neighbor appears to be acting as a watchdog for the grow operation.

When I contacted law enforcement about the problem we were having, I was told that it would take at least three weeks to get a search warrant. Knowing that we could not take another outage, I had to gamble.

I walked across the parking lot to speak with our repair dispatcher about the situation. Coincidentally, there just happened to be a line crew available. I decided to have them replace the 25 KVA transformer with a 50 KVA transformer. I knew that the 25 KVA wouldn't hold up given the load being used by the grow operation and I hoped that a 50 KVA transformer would buy some time until the search warrant was ready. The trick was to switch transformers and alert all the impacted neighbors without chasing our grow house away.



Steve Sprague

The Line Crew was briefed about the transformer change-out and I explained the importance of this particular job. I told the crew that we had a huge grow operation in process that was connected to multiple locations. I also told the crew that if we did anything to spook them while out at the job site, we were afraid of losing all of the grow operations. Understanding how important this job was, the crew was energized and up for the challenge.

When they arrived at the job site they blocked the street from both directions; removed the 25 KVA transformer and installed the new 50 KVA transformer. The job itself took about 25 minutes. Once that was complete the crew went down the street and looked at several other transformers so as not to raise suspicion from either the watchdog or the owner.

Well... the gamble paid off. Three weeks later a search warrant was executed and we found 48-1000 watt lights, 8-charcoal filters and about 756 plants inside. PGE is in the process of criminal and civil action against the grower to attempt and collect the \$30,000 stolen at that location. The associated grow locations were also taken down and losses were estimated at over \$100,000.

The lesson here is to do your homework, weigh the options, make a decision, and then cross your fingers. It could have all went a different way if we were discovered while changing out the transformer. Another thing to remember is it's not a good idea to wait long on these types of investigations because anything can happen and if you wait too long, it usually will. Once law enforcement is involved you also need to keep in mind that your control is limited so focus on what it is that you need to gather to have a successful investigation.

It was a great experience investigating these grow operations and I'm glad that everything worked out the way it did.

TWO OUT OF THREE!

By ENERGY SERVICES SPECIALIST, PEACE RIVER ELECTRIC, WAUCHULA, FLORIDA

It's a fire! No it's a robbery! No it's one of the biggest grow house operations the county has ever seen!

Well two of the three are correct. One afternoon in 2011 the office received a call from a DEA agent in Highlands County of a grow house that they had come across and wanted to let us know so that we could check for a power tap.



Marty Gainous

Well it seems that a passer by noticed a bright light shining through one of the windows in the home, which to him looked like a fire, so he called 911 and the Fire Dept. was dispatched to the location. Before the firefighting crew arrived, a Deputy arrived at the location and found an a/c window unit lying on the ground. The first thing he thought was a robbery and stuck his head inside of the window to investigate. That was when he saw about 30 to 40 pots that contained nubs of what were mature pot plants.

Of course the find by the Deputy was cause enough for a warrant. 1,400 marijuana plants were found, (including what had been stolen). Thus the DEA began their investigation, (pictures, fingerprints, the search through belongings). They then proceeded with the sledge hammers, which brings me back to the beginning of my story.

I am sure that all of you reading this have already figured out that there was no fire. The alleged perpetrator removed the a/c unit to gain entry into the house, causing the bright glare of the grow lights to shine out of the window, which looked like a fire to the passerby, who then called 911, who then dispatched a Deputy, who saw the pot plants, phhhu! I'm sure you get it.

Everyone in the revenue protection business has a story or two that may be odd, unusual, or just a little different and I invite you to share your stories.

It's a fire! No it's a robbery!

Usually the DEA calls us first, before they have gone inside the home, stripping and destroying it of any of its contents that resemble hydroponic growing equipment. That way I can have the service crew take a load reading at the transformer and then calculate the energy theft from there. Not this time, when I arrived there were crushed ballasts, busted transformers, and mangled light fixtures lying all over the side of the yard, along with several 55 gallon trash cans full of bulbs.

So I pulled out my pad and pencil and began taking inventory of the mangled equipment laying in the yard. During my inventory gathering I began talking to one of the Detectives, asking him how they came about the grow house.

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