



Volume 29 Issue 1

Spring 2019

2019 WSUTA / IURPA Joint Conference Phoenix, Arizona



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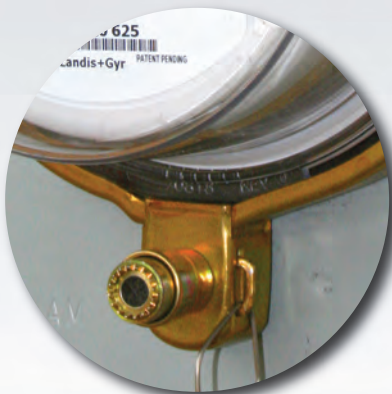
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From the Chairperson

Revenue Protection in a Climate of Change

My guess is that many of you are experiencing the same kinds of things that we are at my utility, change, change and more change and that can be a challenge. With the accelerated pace of change in technology, companies are being forced to or at least drawn into the idea that they must upgrade or replace existing systems. Notice I said systems because not only are we getting new technology tools but we are having almost everything we use replaced or changed, new customer information systems, new work management systems, new ways to track our time and pay. And the beat goes on and on and we are not only affected by the changes but distracted, stymied and overwhelmed. We all know that we can't just use the same tools and computers forever, but the most frustrating thing to many of us is that the things we get as a result of these changes all too often rarely support the people in the field or specialized groups like Revenue Protection. So it is incumbent on all of us that we do everything we can to not get run over by the change bus.

Some of the change coming our way can bring benefit which provides new approaches for doing things. When companies take on projects that are large it's easy to get lost in the shuffle or moved



Steve Sprague
IURPA Chairperson

Some of the change coming our way can bring benefit which provides new approaches for doing things.

aside while our utilities focus on what they believe to be important. But it's important that we stay included to remain part of the overall plan. It's important that we show how Revenue Protection fits in and that we can bring even bigger value if allowed to leverage the new technology. So make sure the company understands the amount of revenue they risk losing without you or even better yet how much more they will realize going forward with the new tools.

It doesn't seem like we can keep our numbers and accomplishments in front of them enough, make sure they know the price they could pay by not giving us the tools we need to do our jobs. But remember as important as we all think we are and the work we do is we are just one piece in a big puzzle and it's not all about us or our mission.

The new meters give us information at our fingertips that never existed before. Instead of taking a field trip to examine a single site, we can now look at our entire system with the push of a button. We have voltage now at the meter level which is one of the most significant changes to ever happen and I am assuming in the gas and water industry they have similar wins. We all must understand that if we don't keep evolving and driving forward we could get left behind. Don't just assume that they are buying and building everything you need in Revenue Assurance. Stay involved and make sure the plans involve you and your groups. We have the ability to take revenue protection to a level it's never been at before but we also have the threat of bad or missing information doing away with some programs. As we all know, the meter is just a piece of the pie in the investigation process, but without educating management on a meter's limitations they may think the meter is the only thing needed. Utilities that blend together technology and revenue protection are going to reap the benefits for years to come.

So even if you solve the problem with the meters and find a way to be part of it along comes a new

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work management system that can also set you back. Keep a voice and stay involved and here is where I take the opportunity to bring up benchmarking again. I have mentioned before and even tried to solicit feedback at a conference where I only received about 10 surveys back, but if we could put data together from at least 30-40 utilities we could set a bench mark that could be used for the revenue protection cause across the country. If we have data in place to show what a proper survey should look like and how utilities are being successful it could be shared with utilities starting programs or groups trying to sustain their program while ensuring that if any other bench marking about revenue protection pops up in the future that at least we will have been the ones to set the bar.

So, with that said it's not too late if you would like me to send you the survey questions just reach out to me at steve.sprague@pgn.com and I will send them to you and for everyone that responds I will send you back the results and post on the IURPA website.

Okay that's enough about the technology I want to encourage all of you to support your regional conferences and to please go to the IURPA website and renew or start your membership. For \$75 per year, that investment is a huge boost to IURPA and our only way for us to stay afloat. It opens the door to data at your fingertips for things like bench marking, conference venues and experts in the industry who are only a call or e-mail away. I just want to remind all of you to stay safe and enjoy your jobs, you have one of the most rewarding jobs in the utility and we must continue to stay united and to share with each other because we are all in this together. It's rare to have a job where you can measure and see the results of your hard work, come to a conference and share with others in a unique and special brotherhood.

Make sure you take the time to thank members of the boards for IURPA and your regional groups because without these people none of this learning and networking would be possible. And if you can attend the joint WSUTA/IURPA conference this year in September. Please take the time to meet and greet our international brothers and sisters as well as catching up with the IURPA members and board members; for some we may only get to see you every 3 or 4 years and we would love to spend time catching up and hearing what's going on at your

utility. Always leave time to see the vendors who help make this whole thing possible because without them we would still be in a mess and these conferences couldn't happen. I would also like to encourage those of you who have the support of your company to see about attending a second conference this year in another part of the country or world to help them boost their attendance while also finding out how and what revenue protection looks like in their part of the world. As someone who has traveled to almost all the regions I can tell you from experience it's money well spent and the problems and solutions you hear about maybe be something you were not even aware of. Thanks, and keep up the great work. Your efforts save millions and protect many. It may often go unappreciated but always know that you have friends behind you waiting to lend a hand and to hold you up when you need it. Stay safe, strong and united in the cause.

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CYCLES

By Dave Whidden

As I write this, I find myself at the same old crossroads. It's a familiar spot for me and you'd think I'd know my way after all of these years. The truth is I do know my way but I'm unhappy to have to be making the journey yet again. In my career of almost 29 years as a Revenue Protection person I can't tell you how many times I've had to defend my existence. It baffles me that the powers that be never seem to see the value of what we do. I recently revisited a business case that my predecessor put together to grow the department. In this case he "projected" the rate of return over a ten year period and it showed a very healthy 3 to 1 ration. Three dollars earned for every dollar spent. Not bad. I decided to take the "projected numbers" and replace them with the "actual numbers" over the same time frame and add one additional year (just because I had the data). The actual rate of return was 10 to 1. Ten dollars brought in for every one spent. I would think this is not only a slam dunk but a no brainer for keeping staffing levels where they belong and yet I had to practically beg for 2 replacement Investigators. I just finally got authorized to replace one of them but only after our retiring champion went before the corporation and pled our case. This was one last valiant effort on his part before he heads off to greener pastures and thank goodness it worked. I like to think that the numbers I fed him along with the burst of theft billing that we processed at the end of the year helped but it's hard to say. It's good to have a champion but what now for us? I guess I'll have to groom a new one. It can be done. I was lucky to inherit mine but I still had to work at maintaining the relationship. Information sharing is key so always make sure that your champion is kept in the loop and make sure to say thank you.

So, why did I choose a title like "cycles" you might ask? Well, it's kind of a play on words common in our industry because cycles are a main theme in the utility world but it's also a part of life. In this case the cycle that I'm revisiting is the need for articles. It never ends and folks just don't feel comfortable with writing. I recently started a workshop on journal writing and I have to tell you I'm really enjoying it. We all have a need to express ourselves in one way or another and let's face it most investigators are good at B.S.-ing and have some great stories. One of the first things I read to my group was an article that I wrote for IURPA called "Nuts". They



Dave Whidden

were fascinated by our world and the folks that we deal with on a daily basis. I really needed a positive outlet (i.e. Something other than drinking Martinis) and this has provided one. I highly encourage you to think about an outlet for yourselves. We all have a lot to share and it's important that we do. Why not let some of the new talent benefit from our experience? There's a lot of

talk in the industry about the brain drain and the retirement of the baby boomers. Guess what? It's here! Why would we think that it wouldn't affect the Revenue Protection community?

The last cycle is concerning that end of the year billing I mentioned earlier in the article. Our metering has been celnet and ami for close to twenty years now and our meters tend to get lonely. No one ever visits them. No meter readers and no collectors. So what kind of theft cycle would we be finding now? That's right. Line side taps in the house mains ahead of the metering and in the troughs. Business is good!

So here's a recap for you. Make sure that you have a Champion. Find an outlet, it doesn't have to be writing but it would be nice if you could share your knowledge and finally make sure to get involved. Don't ask someone else to do something that you wouldn't do yourself.

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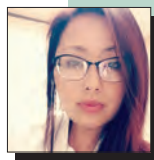
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MIDWEST ENERGY THEFT ASSOCIATION ANNUAL WORKSHOP

By Paul Unruh
Acting META President

Mother Nature was kind to the Midwest Energy Theft Association (META) again in 2018 by keeping the snow away and allowing the annual META workshop to take place on December 6th. And, keep this quiet so Mother Nature doesn't hear, but META will move the workshop to early November in 2019 to minimize the bad weather threat. The workshop was held, for the second year in a row, at NICOR's headquarters in Naperville, Illinois.

The one-day workshop format continues to work well for META. The December workshop saw 34 people from 12 Midwest utilities in attendance. In addition, six vendors also joined the group for the day. The vendors do not set up displays as is common in the multi-day conferences. Rather, they join in the group discussions on the various agenda topics. In addition to representing their companies, the vendors can often share perspective on a national level rather than being limited to the Midwest arena.

The December META agenda featured a presentation on a smart meter current sensor tampering investigation that has produced nearly \$1M in revenue recovery. When revenue to retail electric suppliers is factored in, the value of the case far exceeds \$1M in value. The theft occurred across the entire service area, involving 394 meters at 326 sites. This case is a prime example of how data analytics is finding theft of service that utilities did not have the ability to find in large quantities with the mechanical meters of the past.

Speaking of data analytics, another presentation highlighted the success of a Michigan utility at



By Paul Unruh

building their own analytical engine in house with their internal IT department. Over the last few years, META audiences heard how this utility struggled at developing an external data analytic solution that never produced satisfactory results. Round table discussions at these past workshops allowed META mem-

bers to share their experiences, successes and best practices which helped the Michigan folks decide to pursue their internal program. To see the success of their analytics today was pretty gratifying knowing the history of the journey...and a perfect reason why attendance at regional conferences/workshops, along with a current IURPA membership is so important!

Other topics presented were a pole cut for safety process, supported by Utility Leadership, local authorities and state regulators that allows for disconnection of service to a premise with active customers on service if a smart meter (at the premise) is unreachable. If no access to the meter is granted, and after a series of letters, phone calls and field visits, service to the premise is pole cut. The driver of the process is safety, as the unreachable meter does not allow for required temperature monitoring related to the hot meter socket concerns voiced by opponents of the smart meter.

The group also saw how mobile dispatch interfaces with one company's theft of service database and, in turn, produces files used for the investigation, resolution and back-billing of revenue protection cases. Finally, there was an excellent safety video where field workers described learnings from various field situations that turned unsafe. One worker, on a gas service leak/odor call out in the middle of the night, was robbed, badly beaten and locked in a basement for hours. Seeing and hearing the workers, describe these events in their own words was a powerful way to conclude the day.





IURPA to hold their 30th Anniversary Conference!

Plans are underway for IURPA to host our 30th anniversary conference in the spring of 2020. There will be a host of presentations on a variety of subjects to include international speakers. Tentative information for this conference is as follows:

Date: May 19 – 22, 2020
Location: Drury Inn & Suites, New Orleans, LA
Room Rate: \$149/night

A full breakfast will be provided for all attendees who stay at the hotel. Luncheons and breaks will be provided along with two vendor receptions.

New Orleans has always been an exciting location to visit and we are very excited to host a conference to celebrate our 30th anniversary in this fascinating city.

We hope you plan to join us in New Orleans next year!

New and Improved IURPA website and Facebook page

The IURPA Board of Directors authorized a new and improved website to replace the existing aging website. Goodlook Marketing of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was commissioned for the design and implementation of the new site. It was time for IURPA to have a more modern and functional website. Be sure to check out the site at www.iurpa.org.

The new website, with a fresher, cleaner look, is slated for full implementation in April. While the “public face” of the website provides a more professional appearance compared to the old site, members area is chock full of improvements:

1. The membership directory is more robust, providing full contact information for members to stay in touch.
2. Relevant PowerPoint presentations from the annual regional and international conferences are available for viewing or downloading.
3. Online member registration and payment of dues will now be in a secure environment.
4. In the near future, registration for IURPA conferences and hotel booking will be available.
5. When members wish to query other IURPA members regarding current “best practices,” a new and improved process will be available. In the past, the requester emailed their question to the IURPA webmaster, who then sent an email to the membership. In the new environment, the requester will complete an online form, and the membership will receive the information request from the website.
6. The IURPA newsletters will be available in PDF form for review.
7. The Vendor Page will provide links to their websites, and a “New Products” section will allow vendors to highlight their latest offerings.

Check us out at www.facebook.com/iurpa/

For those members on Social Media, did you know that IURPA has a Facebook page. Relevant news from around the world regarding the theft of energy is posted weekly on the page. In the near future, a private “group” will be available for our members to communicate. Volunteers are also needed to serve as Administrators / Moderators. Interested in participating, email Kurt Roussell at

kurt@revprosystems.com



SSRPA, SCRPA, SURPA, CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

June 11-14, 2019
Crown Plaza
5700 Westpark Drive
Charlotte, NC

Event registration \$250 by May 22nd - \$275 After May 22nd

Room Rate \$139 per night

The 2019 Conference will be held at the Crowne Plaza in Charlotte North Carolina on June 11-14. As always, we will also have a Vendor's Reception and hospitality suite for extended opportunities for networking with experts and Vendors in your field.

Topics will include:

- Vendor Presentations
- Hacking Smart Meters
- Active Shooter
- AMI Analytics
- Dealing with difficult people
- Investigative Procedures
- Court Appearance and Testimony
- External Relationships (law enforcement, judges, solicitors, code enforcement, contractors and community members)
- Sovereign Citizens

Please mark your calendars on these dates to get this great opportunity in your 2019 budgets to increase your knowledge in the areas of Revenue Protection.

Information can be found on the IURPA web site at www.iurpa.org or you may contact

Contact Susan Reinhardt at Susan.Reinhardt@duke-energy.com

NEW HORIZONS, NEW DIRECTIONS, AND OLD FRIENDS:

By Sam Causey

As we go through life, each of us faces opportunities that lead us into uncharted territory, and force us to face the thing we all dread, yet long for at the same time.....Change....

This year my job duties changed, which like many before me, meant that I will no longer be part of the full-time Revenue Protection family, and will be serving my utility in other areas. Additionally, I will be leaving the board and no longer be an active part of the organization. With that in mind, I am going to use the open platform of this article to answer questions that I have received over the years, address upcoming challenges, encourage those of you still in the trenches, and highlight what I see as successes of the association.

Since becoming a board member of the South-Central Revenue Protection Association (**SCRPA**), and leading the team blending the Southeastern Utility Revenue Protection Association (**SURPA**) and South Central Revenue Protection Association into the Southern States Revenue Protection Association (**SSRPA**) I am honored to report to you that the board taking the helm of the new association is not only knowledgeable, but wholly dedicated to the success of the association.

Your board members, **Chris Teems, Eddie Velez, Rick Woods, Gary Sullivan, Susan Reinhardt, and Altee Hicks** are all conscientious leaders, mentors, professionals, and I consider them all friends. I am honored to know them, and without reservation commend them for their advice, opinions, perspectives, and leadership. You will be well led and benefit from their direction.

Over the years, I have been asked these same two questions by many different groups, "What does it take to really have a robust Revenue Protection program, and how can we stay relevant in the changing utility field?"

My experiences have taught me this:

It all begins with the right leadership, and
ALL OF YOU ARE LEADERS!



By Sam Causey

The best leaders are those who look at the whole team, not expecting each person to be a carbon copy of someone else, or for that matter, demanding that your program look just like the one "at that other utility."

The people who make up your community are different than those who live even a few miles away. Recognizing that will keep you from being locked in to "being just like the other guys." You're your customer's needs, both internal and external.

Individually, the natural abilities we each have are not something to fear or be "dealt" with, but instead are opportunities for us to take differing viewpoints, backgrounds, personalities, and upbringing to grow, respect, encourage each other, accept our differences, and take ownership of who we as a group and the goals we seek to achieve. This GREAT approach allows us to grow with the evolving needs of our utility and community.

When developing, honing, refocusing, or re-aligning your program, I recommend subscribing to the **TEAM** theory:

T- Training: Ensure that all personnel receive relevant training to perform the duties of their respective position. Have an open mind in considering outside training options find what works and utilize it to increase overall performance. Just because training is outside the box of normal doesn't mean it doesn't hold value for the program.

E-Empowerment: By granting personnel the freedom to make decisions, you allow each member to become engaged, independent, and confident owners of the outcome of their efforts; dedicated to helping each other meet program goals.

A-Affirmation: I maintain that a fluid style of leadership that allows individuals to craft initiatives for themselves makes the program welcoming, important, vital to corporate objectives, and relevant to the community. This allows supervision to lead by example, not command. Also, looking for each other's strengths, rather than weaknesses, encourages the team to maintain a positive outlook.

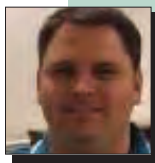
M- Mentoring: Each employee creates an environment that increases value, promotes diversity, and bonds the group into a cohesive unit. Additionally, a tailored approach to developing your team will take the differences and turn it into fuel to develop each member and propel them to levels of accomplishment that reward the group, the individual, the manager and the overall program.

Finally, I offer the following observations that my experience has taught me are true.

- The file and the knife, although different, each serve a valued purpose. Without the file, the knife becomes dull and ineffective, and without the knife the file has no purpose. Conflict is necessary for growth, and those who challenge you should be considered your best advocates. Embrace your group's diversity and channel the spectrum of personalities and gifts to make each other the best possible.
- Change is inevitable, and although we all dread it to some extent, we must keep an open eye to the future if we are to retain our relevance and vitality.
- Just because we have always done "**IT**" this way doesn't mean we have done "**IT**" the best way. Constant self- evaluation keeps a program efficient and effective.
- No good deed goes unpunished; however, if it is truly good and right, the punishment will, in the end, be worth the temporary pain. So don't shay away from making a decision. Only a moving ship makes a wake.
- Even Idiots can have a novel and valid point. Don't become so stuck in your own viewpoint that you miss the golden truth in another person's ideas.
- Change is coming, and most likely when you least want it. Look for new trends, and when change comes, be the one who embraces it and owns it as a step toward being better.

- Remember the past, but don't be consumed by it. Someday, someone is going to look at what you have done as "back in the old days..." The golden era is upon us, seize it while it's here.

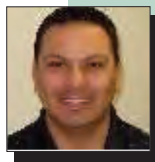
Thank you to all of you for allowing me to serve, and I wish you all the greatest success as you grow into a new and better association.



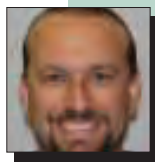
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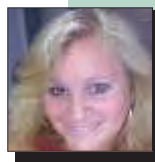
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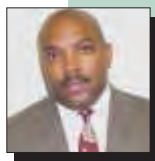
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ROTATING IN.

By Erik Margison

A recent article in the IURPA newsletter spoke of finding the next generation of power theft investigators due to the aging workforce in electric utility companies. As a new member to this field, and to this organization, I wanted to share my experiences regarding starting in this field, adapting to the new challenges ahead, and absorbing the wealth of knowledge that has been made available to me. As in any new position, you hope to be able to take advantage of the experienced veterans in your chosen field. Unfortunately, the vast amount of my experience has not lent that opportunity to me. And I can say without a doubt, that has been an obstacle that must be dealt with. In the end we get up to speed and get the job done, but I am always asking myself “what could have been?” had I been able to take advantage of the prior folk’s experiences and knowledge that had been doing the job for so many years. How much longer did it take me to get up to speed? What do I still not know? The adage “You don’t know what you don’t know” is constantly in my thoughts. Could you imagine learning this job by watching videos or reading from a manual? The learning curve would be dramatically steeper and more difficult, not to mention the increased risk of safety incidents. And this brings me to my experience with this new opportunity I have been given... I was brought in through a rotational assignment and able to spend time with all the different investigators in my area on a one on one basis for many weeks, and after that was still able to work closely with these same investigators for many more months. The ability to have this time with them proved invaluable to me. To be able to see how each person approached their work, the differences and the similarities, that I then could adapt to my processes only helped to hone my skills. In addition to being able to absorb this knowledge and experience it also allowed me to determine if this type of work would even be something I wanted to do. In the past I have thought a task or job would be of interest to me only to realize after that it was



Erik Margison

not. The rotational assignment allowed both parties to be confident in what they were getting prior to any concrete commitments. Going forward I have a much higher confidence in what I am doing which allows me to be better adapted and focused to the changes and challenges coming down the road that all utility companies are inevitably going to face. I felt it important to offer the perspective of someone who has recently undergone this rotation into this field and to hopefully highlight the advantages of this extended training. Although this is not the only way to handle the challenges of the next generation, I believe it to be the most common-sense approach to it. Looking back on all the knowledge and experience I was exposed to – and still am being exposed to – I will be forever grateful for the rotational opportunity and hopefully allow the people who are close to leaving the knowledge that their work and legacy will be carried on with the same respect and vigor that they approached their job with.



President

Randy Howe

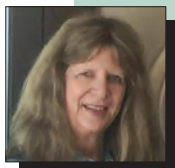
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SCANA
OFFICERS



WSUTA / IURPA **Joint Revenue Protection Conference**

September 9-12, 2019
The Wigwam Resort
Litchfield Park, AZ

Western States Utility Theft Association and **International Utilities Revenue Protection Association** are very happy to announce we are returning to the beautiful Wigwam Resort, 300 East Wigwam Blvd, Litchfield Park, Arizona, near Phoenix, September 9-12, 2019. Litchfield Park is located just 25 minutes west of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. Please contact the Wigwam to arrange group arrivals.

The **WSUTA** Conference offers exceptional professional development and networking opportunities. It features progressive education and exceptional training, the contemporary trends and issues in utility theft investigation, new products and services relative to the industry and the ability to network with seasoned professionals in the business.

With work hours cut, job losses, price increases, and businesses facing closures, utilities may experience an increase in theft as some customers might choose to take unrealistic and illegal measures to get more for less. It's with strong efforts and knowledgeable staff working towards catching and eliminating theft, that the revenue stream from utility sales can remain stable and on track with production, ensuring that rates stay as low as possible for as long as possible. How can your business afford to not attend?

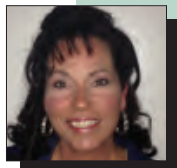
Conference registration is \$400.00 which includes two full days and one half day of valuable training and networking, breakfast and lunch both days. An evening Vendor Reception will be provided and is a valuable opportunity to interact with peers in the industry.

The Wigwam is providing us the group guest room rate of \$145.00 per night. Please contact the Wigwam Resort at (800) 327-0396 to reserve your room. Explain you are attending the **Western States Utility Theft Association / International Utilities Revenue Protection Association Conference**.
www.wigwamarizona.com

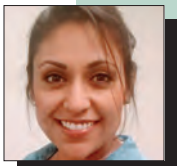
We're excited about bringing you this conference and look forward to our past members, new members, and all the many vendors joining us once again. The agenda will be posted. Registrations are now being taken at www.wsuta.org and the Wigwam is waiting for your call!

If you have any questions, feel free to contact any one of us from the website. www.wsuta.org

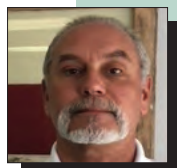
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Bryan N. Uber



Meter Defender

By: Bryan N. Uber

Opportunity

Electric theft costs utilities tens of millions in lost revenue and creates hazardous conditions on an annual basis. Illegal hookups and jumpers expose field technicians and customers to hazardous conditions, which can cause fires, injuries, or even death. Existing theft prevention hardware such as barrel locks or side clamps, could possibly be compromised lending it less effective at preventing unauthorized access. One attributing factor would be the keys not having an established chain of custody and the theft prevention hardware can be destroyed without notification. Our existing process to mitigate theft does not impact the customer's behavior, which results in repeat theft. Our inability to change the customer's behavior has a negative impact on our good rate payers and introduces waste through rework. Because of this reality, Jason Zola and I, along with the PECO revenue protection team, developed a solution to overcome these opportunities.

Solution

While brainstorming for solutions, we determined that the solution needed a device that was quick and easy to install, and the user interface needed to be simple and logical. We developed and designed the Meter Defender, which is a IoT (Internet of Things) device that communicates over cellular network to the cloud. The device is installed and secured to the meter box with industrial grade adhesive in less than a minute, and provides constant tampering notifications for up to 5 years. Once installed, the Field Technician uses a mobile app. to arm the device and establish a chain of custody by documenting the existing conditions with a short description and pictures. If the meter board experiences unauthorized access, the Meter Defender sends a signal to the cloud, which prompts the back office to create a Revenue Protection investigation order. Once the Revenue Protection investigation order is dispatched, the Field Technician interfaces with the Meter Defender through a mobile app. and document hazardous condition. Our ability to quickly respond to the Meter Defender alarm is the catalyst to changing the customer's behavior. The back office can interface with installed Meter Defenders through the web portal, where analysis and live updates are provided.

Path Forward

In roughly 18 months, the Meter Defender went from concept to pilot. We attribute this success to everyone involved in this project and to our leadership team who provides encouragement and support. The Meter Defender has a patent pending that covers the IoT hardware device. We are working to develop an LTE device and expanding the application of this technology. In 2019, we are looking to expand the application of Meter Defender into other Exelon utilities.



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IURPA • 29 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 twenty-nine 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.

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