

Denton Municipal Electric combines dispatching and work assignment into a single system



At Denton Municipal Electric (DME) in Texas, the electric department operates the only 24/7 dispatch service for the city other than 911 emergency. While DME serves about 51,000 electric meters, it is responsible for responding to calls related to electric, water, wastewater, landfill, drainage, and traffic services for a population of 126,000 covering 100 square miles. Each department manages on-call workers, but the electric department handles all of the dispatch efforts.

Burdened by office and field operations based on cumbersome paper records and hand data entry, Denton Municipal Electric (DME) selected IFS's integrated Mobile Workforce Management software solution to improve response time, reliability, and crew safety.

"Because DME's systems operations group manages all outages and crews as they respond to incidents, integrating our data systems on a common platform is becoming very important as we grow," said Trey Price, Engineering Systems Applications Supervisor. "Two years ago, we determined our old archaic system was crashing too often, unable to deliver accurate GIS information to crews, and was a cybersecurity risk. To combine dispatching and work assignment into one system, improve productivity and data integrity, obtain real-time visibility into crew activity, and help our crews quickly and safely get to their assignments, we issued an RFP for software with paperless workflow support and selected IFS as our vendor."

Project goals and requirements

DME sought to implement an enterprise-level system with these goals:

- Paperless workflow
- Unified dispatching and work assignment, under one workflow across all city utilities
- Improved incident response
- Improved technician productivity
- Improved data integrity, preventing entry errors
- Real-time visibility into all work across the utility

About Denton Municipal Electric

Since 1905 Denton Municipal Electric (DME) has provided safe and reliable power to residents of the greater Denton area. DME is a community-owned, not-for-profit public power utility that serves 64,000 customers with 100% renewable energy.

www.cityofdenton.com



DME's project requirements included

- Configurable, utility-wide system for managing work
- Create and manage tickets for various citywide calls (inclusive of water, wastewater, traffic, electric and fiber locates, metering tickets, and maintenance tickets)
- Integrate and manage work from multiple systems, including CIS, CMMS/WAMS, OMS, 811, and GIS
- Handle ticketing for non-customer calls (e.g., call to report a leak not related to their own service)
- Create orders in both the office and field

DME's IFS solution environment includes mobile service orders, mobile outage orders, locates, and the dispatching and creation of water service work – all integrated with the utility's GIS system

Price noted, "The IFS WorkSpace office app displays on computer screens in the office, and the WorkBook mobile app on smart phones or tablets in the field. The real-time map view allows us to instantly filter such items as electric orders, outages, locates, and streetlights. If I am in the office, I can see where the crews are, what's been assigned, and what they are working on. If I am a crew member, I can see what is assigned to me and prioritize my work. In addition to accurate GIS information regarding the work location, I can now pull up account information related to that location."

From the beginning of the utility's Mobile Workforce Management deployment, the feedback has been very positive. "Our office staff and electric crews are finding the IFS system is easy to use and provides even more information than expected," Price said. "Response times are faster, and we expect the improved response times and faster power restoration to boost customer satisfaction. By unifying our workflow around a paperless system, we are reducing operational costs."

Lessons learned and next steps

About five years ago, DME tried to deploy a workforce management system from a different vendor but the implementation failed because it was too complicated. Fortunately, the IFS deployment was successful and easily adopted by their office and field teams.

In terms of advice for his colleagues at other utilities, Price recommends involving users of the system very early in the process while appreciating the time investment the project will require. He emphasized, "All big IT rollouts require patience. But if you manage expectations, secure agreement that the old system needs to be changed, and give your personnel tools that are information rich yet easy to use, your deployment will be successful."

The next steps for DME will be deploying IFS Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL), adding other work order types, and expanding the system to cover other city departments.

Benefits seen using IFS

- One workflow across the city utilities
- Real-time visibility into work across the city
- Faster response times leading to improved customer satisfaction
- Lower overall operational costs
- Reporting and analysis on key performance indicators
- Crews have better information on what is happening in the field
- No more paper work orders

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Trey Price, Engineering Systems Applications Supervisor, Denton Municipal Electric

Find out more

Further information contact your local IFS office or visit our web site, ifs.com

