



CITY OF BAY ST. LOUIS

CLIENT

BAY ST. LOUIS, MISSISSIPPI

LOCATION



ARB® Mobile™ Helps Drive Up Efficiency with Neptune R900® Technology for Water and Gas Metering Applications

Founded in 1699 by French explorers, Bay St. Louis has long been known for its scenic location on the Mississippi gulf coast. Visitors come for its beaches or to explore the historic Old Town District with its antique shops, restaurants, and entertainment spots.

On August 29, 2005, everything changed. Fifty miles west of Bay St. Louis, the city of New Orleans is more closely associated with the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. But while the damage in New Orleans was extensive, its neighboring cities along the Mississippi gulf coast (Waveland, Pass Christian, and Bay St. Louis, among others) were almost completely and, quite literally, wiped off the map.

In Bay St. Louis, the flood surge from Katrina reached 28 feet. More than 90 percent of the city was under water. Many of the residences were washed right off their foundations. The water and gas utility distribution system was severely damaged.

After the storm, Assistant Public Works Director William "Buddy" Zimmerman and his team worked around the clock to restore water service to Bay St. Louis' residents. Most of the residents had safe, clean drinking water within five days. An outside group of volunteer gas utility experts came in to restore the gas system.

Many months later, when the majority of the clean-up was complete, Bay St. Louis began a program to rebuild its water and gas distribution systems. Armed with an \$80 million grant from FEMA, almost everything is being replaced. This includes all of the city's water and gas meters as well as meter sets. When the time came to choose a vendor, Bay St. Louis knew which technology it preferred.

Bay St. Louis had been a long-time Neptune customer, purchasing Neptune water meters for many years. When Neptune introduced the R900G in 2007 to complement Neptune's industry-leading R900® technology, it was a perfect fit. This rebuilding project provided an opportunity for Bay St. Louis to upgrade its entire water and gas utility to Neptune's ARB® Mobile System™.

According to Zimmerman, the move to Neptune's ARB Mobile System was an easy decision. "With so much rebuilding going on, manpower is a real issue for us. Neptune's ARB Mobile solution makes meter reading a much easier, quicker task. We have more time to work on the system and to do maintenance."

Cash flow is also an issue for the utility. "Once the system is fully deployed, we'll be able to read all of our water and gas meters in one day a month," Zimmerman added. "This will allow us to consolidate our billing cycle and send out all of the bills on the same day."

The utility's rebuilding project is now entering its fourth and final stage. With all of the upheaval for Bay St. Louis residents that comes with reconstruction after the storm, customer service is a major concern for the utility. "People want their lives back," said Zimmerman. "We needed a trouble-free meter reading system. So far, all the indicators are very good."

Neptune Technology Group Inc.

1600 Alabama Highway 229
Tallahassee, AL 36078
USA
Tel: (800) 645-1892
Fax: (334) 283-7299

Neptune Technology Group (Canada) Ltd.

7275 West Credit Avenue
Mississauga, Ontario
L5N 5M9
Canada
Tel: (905) 858-4211
Fax: (905) 858-0428

Neptune Technology Group Inc.

Ejército Nacional No. 418
Piso 12, Desp. 1201-1202
Col. Chapultepec Morales
Delegación Miguel Hidalgo
11570 México, Distrito Federal
Tel: (525) 55203 5294 / (525) 55203 5708
Fax: (525) 55203 6503



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neptunetg.com