

A Case Study:

St. Marys Area Water Authority's Journey from Fax to Cloud

St. Marys Area Water Authority (SMWA) has been using the traditional fax machine to receive and process PA One Calls. But Dwight Hoare, the authority manager and PMAA Region Seven Director, had some concerns about relying on faxes or emails when considering the associated risks:

What if a paper fax gets lost?

What if an email is accidentally deleted?

What happens to a fax or email after hours when there are no office staff to handle the communication?

What are the risks of administrating email if there's a computer virus or SPAM?

How long does it take to retrieve information for past calls?

Where do we store all the data?

"Before retiring the traditional fax machine, we wanted to know if there was a better solution and if not, if one could be developed," said Hoare. "So I initially consulted with representatives at PA One Call."

During these discussions Hoare was told that it was possible to plug a web-based solution into PA One Call's XML Interface.

He then approached a computer consulting company with experience in working with rural utilities to see if a custom software solution could be developed.

Though it took a year of input and feedback, all of Hoare's questions and concerns were addressed with the new

software called "1Mark," a cloud-based internal work order system used to process, manage, assign, track, close and store data including videos and pictures of PA One Calls.

This innovative software program translates the PA One Call email into a user-friendly screen that is accessible by computer, i-Pad, smart phone, or other mobile device. Best of all, this system is easy to use by all staff through its color-coded "ticket," arrangement by due dates, large icons, capacity to overlay maps, along with other administrative features.

Hoare has found the benefits of the new software:

Allows staff the ability to view, from any mobile device, anywhere and anytime, the current status of all PA One Calls;

Allows management to assign work to staff at the click of a button;

Provides for a mapping feature that allows the use of existing GPS mapping

as an overlay to see where the work is being completed;

Provides field staff the ability to clear tickets on the job site, thereby saving trips back to the office;

Addresses emergency PA One Calls by providing a texting function that sends these calls directly to cell phones;

Eliminates worry about software upgrades and backups.

"We have retired the fax machine for PA One Calls and transitioned to the Cloud," said Hoare. "We are very pleased with this new software and believe that it is only a matter of time before all water authorities are forced to move away from the fax machine."

For more information, contact Dwight Hoare via his email at SMWA: stwaterdhoare@windstream.net.

