



## Case Study

# Oregon City Finds Improved Customer Service with STAR<sup>®</sup> Network City of Redmond Water Department, USA

The water department in the City of Redmond, which is located along the eastern side of the Cascade Mountain Range in Central Oregon, serves approximately 28,000 residents.



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“We chose STAR for the added benefits to the customer. We’re able to answer customer questions a lot more efficiently and effectively, as opposed to just getting one manual read a month. We’re able to track leaks in the system on the customer’s side.”

**Josh Wedding**  
Automatic Meter Reading Systems Manager for the City of Redmond

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## BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Redmond’s water utility relied on contracted meter readers to manually report water meter data once a month. Using this outdated monthly system, the city was obtaining inconsistent information that did not allow the utility to effectively answer customer questions.

“You’ve got somebody on every end, from technical support, to product management, to a program manager that’s there and actually willing to help you, and if they can’t help you, they’ll get you to somebody that can. For me, that’s huge.”

**Josh Wedding**

Automatic Meter Reading Systems Manager for the City of Redmond

Additionally, the expense of hiring the contracted company and dispatching a pickup truck and field service person to a site to perform a meter read was becoming a financial burden. This, combined with the cost resulting from water loss due to undetected leaks, prompted the utility to search for a more cost-effective solution that would also help serve its customers more efficiently.

## SOLUTION OVERVIEW

In 2006, the city eliminated the contracted company and implemented Aclara’s STAR® network system. With approximately 10,000 end points, the utility uses the system to receive accurate meter data over a secure, long-range wireless network, eliminating the need for site visits.

Aclara’s STAR® network meter transmission units (MTUs) are small, permanently sealed modules that are connected to the utility’s water meters.

The MTUs read the meter and forward the meter data on an FCC-licensed wireless channel at customer-specified intervals. These messages are received by one of several data collector units (DCUs) that cover the service area.

The DCUs receive, process and store meter reading information transmitted from the MTUs and forward the information to the STAR® network headend located at the utility.

The headend collects, validates, processes, and stores data transmitted by the DCUs, providing billing, customer service, operations and other departments timely access to comprehensive account information. The STAR® network system also provides a complete range of customizable management and diagnostic reports.



Preparing MTUs for installation.

## BUSINESS JUSTIFICATION

The fast data turnaround helps the city of Redmond better serve its customers.

For example, if a customer calls to ask about an unusually high bill, the utility is able to tap into the database and determine if and when a leak may have occurred. Instead obtaining data from one read a month, the utility can now examine hourly activity on a customer’s account to pinpoint any abnormalities.

**“We’re really pleased with every aspect of the product, as well as the service.”**

**Josh Wedding**

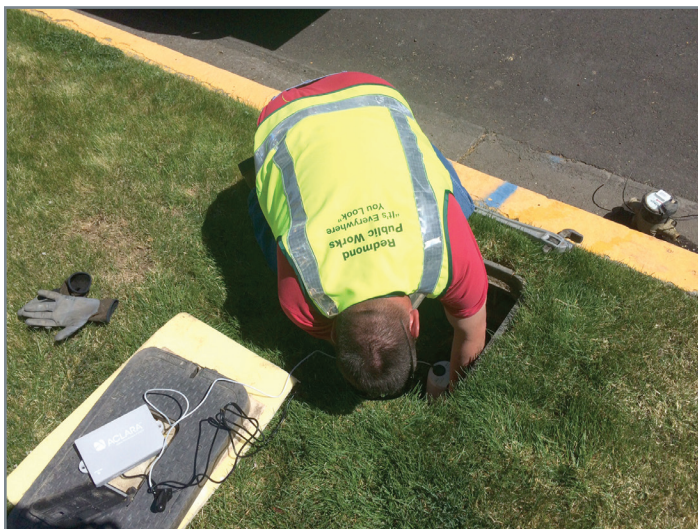
Automatic Meter Reading Systems Manager for the City of Redmond

The ability to immediately identify and track leaks has added benefits for the utility itself as well. Redmond is able to stay in line with its water conservation management objectives and the city can provide accurate data during its annual state water audits. The utility has also experienced a cost savings by curbing water loss through early leak detection.

Customer service is important to Wedding, especially when working with a technology provider. He noted a lack of technical support when dealing with other software providers, but not with Aclara.

In one instance, the city’s cellular service was disrupted, requiring the system to go offline for more than two weeks. While the cellular provider struggled to get its circuit switches back up and running, Aclara sprang into action.

The city is currently in the process of upgrading to two-way, 3000-series MTUs to take advantage of the system’s time stamp data and two-way communications.



Aclara MTU being installed in Redmond.

**“They bumped us to the top of the line in order to resolve the issue, we got some much-needed hardware to do some DCU upgrades. We actually switched from the way that we transferred data with code division multiple access over to a different method of transmitting.”**

**Josh Wedding**

Automatic Meter Reading Systems Manager for the City of Redmond