



## CASE STUDY:

### Itronix and MDSI Help Nicor Gas Keep Two Million Customers Warm



For 50 years, Nicor Gas has been developing new technologies, businesses, and services to meet the energy needs of communities in northern Illinois and the Chicago suburbs. Nicor Gas, Nicor Inc.'s largest subsidiary, is one of the largest natural gas distribution companies in the country, serving more than two million customers in 641 communities.

To ensure that its field technicians can work efficiently and effectively, and provide quality customer service, Nicor Gas outfits them with the best, most reliable hardware and software the company can find. Nicor Gas has relied on MDSI's enterprise mobile workforce software for 11 years, beginning with an earlier version of the product, Advantex RM, and is now upgrading to Advantex r7. In June 2002, it began outfitting its technicians with **Itronix GoBook laptop computers**, which gave the company the ability to enhance its Advantex solution. Half of the Nicor Gas workforce is still using Advantex RM; the other half has upgraded to Advantex r7 and by 2006, the company expects to move everyone over to Advantex r7.

Nicor Gas uses the Advantex software on the Itronix GoBook computers to dispatch work to the field, monitor work progress, respond to changing conditions, and measure workforce performance. The software's scheduling capabilities allow them to optimize routes and personnel, ensuring that the right job is assigned to the right person. With Advantex and the Itronix GoBook integrated GPS, Nicor Gas will be able to use map-based dispatching, allowing dispatchers to make quicker decisions in cases where multiple customers have lost their natural gas service. The company's technicians are also able to keep and wirelessly update maps on their Itronix laptops (eliminating the need for paper maps), as well as Nicor Gas' specification or "how to" manual.

Nicor Gas technicians currently use Itronix GoBook IIs, and will switch to GoBook IIIs to take advantage of the system's internal GPS antenna and integrated GPS transmission; Intel Centrino mobile technology and faster processor, and improved display screens that allow users to more easily and efficiently operate outdoors under any condition. Like all Itronix wireless, rugged mobile computing devices, the GoBook III is built to withstand rain, snow, wind, dust, fire, shock, and vibration.

The Itronix GoBook III features integrated support for up to three different wireless networks, including discrete 802.11b/g (wireless LAN), Bluetooth, and wireless WAN technologies. The comprehensive wireless support, complemented by Itronix's MobilityXE wireless roaming mobility software, enables mobile workers to maintain uninterrupted wireless connectivity and communication while roaming between networks. With the GoBook III wireless connectivity, Nicor Gas field technicians can log on from home each morning, download all their jobs through the company's network, and receive details about each job, its location, and any special comments.

When finishing a job, technicians can complete their report and send it back to the main office.

Since technicians are measured on response time, it's critical that the hardware and software they use are working properly, and with Itronix GoBook computers and MDSI's Advantex software, Nicor Gas knows it has reliable, best-in-breed solutions. Nicor Gas' system upgrade and improved technologies will provide field employee efficiency and customer care with greater access to customer information. As a result, employees will be able to do their jobs better and serve customers more effectively.

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Itronix designs, manufactures and deploys mission-critical wireless, rugged computing solutions that maximize the productivity of mobile workers. For more than 15 years, Itronix has worked extensively in the utilities industry. Today, the company works with roughly 90% of the largest utilities in the United States, as well as organizations in the commercial field services, telecommunications, government, public safety and EMS markets.

More information about Itronix and its products are available at [www.itronix.com](http://www.itronix.com)