



Product:

Itronix GoBook

Application:

Utility Field Service Technicians

Itronix Solution:

- *Itronix GoBook fully-rugged notebook computer*
- *802.11b Wi-Fi LAN*
- *MapFrame Corp. viewing application*
- *Employee training services*
- *iCARE services*

For more information contact:

Itronix Corporation

801 South Stevens Ave.
Spokane, WA 99204
800-441-1309
509-624-6600
sales@itronix.com

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

Itronix Case Study:

SOUTHWEST GAS CORPORATION

SITUATION: *From Microfiche to Megabytes*

Imagine a system that provides up-to-the-minute pipeline information to hundreds of gas utility locators and construction workers—all at the touch of a button. No cumbersome maps, out-dated manuals and complicated retrieval processes. Changes made in the Engineering department are in the hands of service people on the street, within hours.

PROBLEM: *Need for efficient communications*

Southwest Gas could imagine this system, but needed a way to make the vision a reality. Serving 1.4 million customers and maintaining a crew of over 400 company trucks, Southwest Gas has the task of keeping its workers updated.

An Itronix Solution

Thanks to Itronix, Southwest Gas now uses wireless LAN (Local Area Network) technology known as 802.11b (also called "Wi-Fi" for Wireless Fidelity) to download pipeline engineering information to GoBooks in more than 400 company trucks at local operations centers each evening. When locators and construction crews hit the road the next day, they're working with the latest information on pipe location, size, type, fittings, and installation dates—which means they're working faster and smarter.

Field-deployed PCs are not new to the gas industry. MDTs (mobile data terminals) are routinely used to send and receive scheduling and customer order information, and to manage order processing and compliance information. What is new about Southwest's mapping enhancement is how it leverages wireless communication to completely supplant a cumbersome and costly paper/microfiche system.

The Itronix GoBook, with its combined power, speed and rugged portability, makes the technology possible. Here's how it works: Digital maps and updates produced by Engineering are transmitted to short-range 802.11b transmitters located atop the operations centers.

Each evening, the wireless transmitters "wake up" the GoBooks in the service trucks and upload the new or updated files to each notebook. The system is hands-free, seamless and automatic.

"We were impressed by the GoBook, which had the disk storage, color touchscreen display, and processor speed we needed to quickly load and view the piping files," says Pat Ford, a project manager for Southwest Gas.

"With the size of GoBook's hard drive, it's possible to carry the pipeline infrastructure for an entire metropolitan area on a single unit," says Ford. "Every service, every main and feeder line is presented in complete detail." Southwest uses a viewing application developed by MapFrame Corp. that enables field workers to enlarge drawings, pan and scan over maps and even distinguish between steel and plastic pipe using GoBook's color display screen. And, because the GoBook is built to meet or exceed military standards for rugged performance, Ford says it stands up to the dirt, vibration, temperature extremes and hard knocks that are an everyday part of workers' life.

Results: *Impacting the bottom-line*

With the new integrated electronic mapping platform Southwest has been able to improve employee performance and enhance customer service. Location crews can pinpoint gas lines faster, minimizing excavation dangers for homeowners, landscapers and builders. With the instant availability of mapping information, service responsiveness has improved. Hours of staff time spent manually updating microfiche maps have been eliminated and overall crew effectiveness and productivity has increased. And, with the addition of the company's operations manual to the system, employees can now also search the manuals for faster information retrieval.

"Appropriate use of new technology, coupled with employee training, skills and dedication, allow us to accomplish tasks with better results, including increased quality with less cost to the customer," says Bob Weaver, Vice President of Information Services for Southwest Gas. "Our partnership with Itronix has helped make it happen."