

Case Study:

Charleston Water System

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Partnership to provide education and financial protection to homeowners

Charleston Water System (CWS) has been providing potable water to the citizens of Charleston, South Carolina, since 1917, when City Council created the Commission of Public Works to manage the City's drinking water supply. Since then, technological advances in water treatment and distribution have made Charleston's drinking water some of the cleanest, safest water in the country. This is a source of pride for CWS, as it aligns with their core values of continuous pursuit of excellence, customer focus, open and honest communication, accountability, teamwork, innovation, and ethical behavior and integrity. These values are closely aligned with those of HomeServe, a provider chosen by CWS in 2013 to offer private water and sewer line repair services to homeowners.

NUMEROUS CALLS TO THE UTILITY LEADS TO A SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION

"We were receiving many calls from customers about water leaks or other issues that turned out to be on the private exterior water or sewer service line, and very often those customers were not aware that these water and sewer pipes in their yard are part of their private plumbing system and that they are responsible for any repairs, which can be expensive," said Kin Hill, the utility's CEO. "To address this issue and support our customer's needs, we decided to provide our customers with an option for avoiding unexpected repair costs by offering an affordable warranty option for water and sewer service lines. Since establishing our own program was not viewed as an ideal situation, we decided to partner with a professional company with the expertise to provide this service."

After a rigorous selection process that included a thorough review of HomeServe's protection plan terms, business practices and customer satisfaction ratings, CWS decided to partner with HomeServe. The objective for CWS was to raise awareness about service line responsibilities as well as provide an affordable option from a reputable company for its customers.

STRONG RESPONSE INDICATES NEED

Charleston homeowners have generally been very enthusiastic about the program, and those who have had claims have been extremely satisfied with the service they have received. To date, there are over 12,000 Charleston Water System customers enrolled.

Since the December 2013 program launch, Charleston residents have saved over \$2.8 million in private repair costs.

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Dorothy Harrison
Chief Administrative
Officer, CWS

"This program has exceeded our expectations and we have received many favorable reviews from our customers," said Dorothy Harrison, Chief Administrative Officer at CWS. "We have also been given positive feedback from citizens who have not chosen to purchase the warranty option but still appreciate the utility providing such information."

RAISING AWARENESS AND PROTECTING HOMEOWNERS

Educational marketing about homeowners' responsibility for service lines is a key component of the program. Residents receive information about the program via direct mail, bill inserts and digital media. The mailings and all program costs are covered by HomeServe.

When an emergency occurs, homeowners contact HomeServe via the company's 24/7/365 repair hotline. A HomeServe specialist collects information from the homeowner and a local contractor then contacts the homeowner to arrange a convenient appointment. HomeServe also follows up with homeowners after repairs are made to measure customer satisfaction.

Additionally, having access to fully vetted, licensed and insured local contractors provides customers with peace of mind, since these contractors may require access to their home. In addition to vetting, HomeServe sends email/text verification of who is coming, including a picture of the technician, and they have records of exactly who was sent and what happened on the call. Calling a contractor out of the phone book provides none of these inherent safety benefits.

Finally, protecting CWS customer privacy is always of utmost importance. CWS does not share any customer information or customer account data with HomeServe, or any third party. For direct marketing purposes, HomeServe uses USPS data to ship its promotional mailings.

NOT JUST A PROVIDER, A TRUE PARTNER

CWS considers itself a true community partner, supporting local special events with free water, assisting governmental agencies and non-profits with publicity through bill inserts, providing educational opportunities, and connecting citizens in need with assistance programs. The partnership with HomeServe includes a revenue share program, which supports a fund to help disadvantaged citizens pay their monthly water bills.

HomeServe is aligned with CWS when it comes to giving back to the communities where we live and work. HomeServe has a long legacy of helping communities and homeowners in need via our HomeServe Cares program, providing pro bono repairs to disadvantaged residents with a repair emergency. The recently launched HomeServe Cares Foundation expands the program for greater impact and includes grant funding for community-based projects, employment assistance for veterans transitioning from the military into skilled trades, and employee charitable giving and volunteerism.

To learn more about how you can partner with the NLC Service Line Warranty Program to bring peace of mind to your residents, visit servicelinepartner.com.

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