



SERVLINE Case Study



From Data to Protection: AMI and ServLine Working Together in Eufaula, Alabama

Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) is transforming how utilities approach water management. These innovative systems enable utilities to detect leaks more quickly, better understand usage patterns, and operate more efficiently. But while AMI has a lot to offer, it's not without its challenges. Factors such as customer adoption, data management, and phased rollouts can impact how quickly benefits are felt.

To round out AMI's capabilities, programs like ServLine Leak Protection step in to safeguard customers against high water bills caused by leaks and help utilities stay compliant with their financial requirements.

The Promise of AMI for Better Leak Management

AMI is influencing how municipalities and utilities approach leak detection and prevention. By enabling real-time water usage monitoring, these systems detect anomalies, such as leaks, much earlier than traditional meters could. The benefits include conserving water resources, lowering operational costs, and mitigating unexpected high bills for consumers.

For utilities, the data isn't just about leak detection. AMI offers insights into water use trends, which helps them forecast demand, plan upgrades, and reduce unnecessary costs. It's a practical step toward managing water more sustainably and effectively.

The Realities of AMI Rollouts

While the potential of AMI is exciting, rollouts come with hurdles that limit its immediate effectiveness. Here are some of the challenges cities and utilities have faced:

- **Customer Engagement is Limited**

AMI's customer-facing features, such as online portals, are great tools—but they're only helpful if people use them. For older residents or those unfamiliar with tech, navigating those systems can feel like a challenge. This can leave a large portion of the population out of the loop.

- **Information Overload**

Utilities that adopt AMI must also manage the influx of vast amounts of data. Without



proper systems and workflows, the information can quickly overwhelm both staff and resources, turning benefits into burdens.

- **Rollouts Take Time**

AMI deployment often occurs gradually, meaning its benefits are not immediately available to all customers. This incremental rollout can lead to inconsistencies in service levels and expectations, as some customers gain access to enhanced features while others must wait.

- **Limitations in Leak Prevention**

AMI does not prevent leaks from happening. While it reduces their potential severity by flagging them earlier, the system's effectiveness depends on how quickly customers act on the information. Without swift dissemination and action, leaks can still result in significant costs.

Enhancing AMI with ServLine Leak Protection

To address these challenges, utilities can augment AMI with the ServLine Leak Protection Program. ServLine protects customers from financial hardship caused by unexpected high water bills resulting from a leak, regardless of whether an AMI system notifies them. This ensures that consumers are financially shielded, even in cases where AMI alerts are delayed or overlooked.

Additionally, the ServLine program helps utilities reduce bad debt expense and stay compliant with bond covenants. These covenants often prohibit utilities from "giving away" water, even to assist customers with large bills resulting from leaks. Breaching these agreements can lead to costly fines or penalties. By establishing a program that both protects consumers and adheres to regulatory requirements, ServLine addresses a critical pain point in the implementation of AMI.

Eufaula, Alabama's, Journey with AMI

The Water Works and Sewer Board of the City of Eufaula, Alabama (hereinafter referred to as EWWSB), began offering the ServLine program in 2022. EWWSB began installing AMI in July 2024 as part of its effort to modernize its water system. EWWSB finds that the combination of these programs ensures both technology and customer needs are addressed. As in many cities, adoption of the AMI customer portal has been slow, with only 5% of residents actively using the platform to monitor their water usage and respond to alerts. ServLine acts as a bridge, offering financial protection for leaks, regardless of the consumer's engagement with AMI data.

"This upgrade to AMI is a big step forward for EWWSB, and while it's helping a small percentage of engaged customers catch leaks earlier, the reality is that leaks can still happen to anyone. That's why the ServLine Leak Protection Program has been such a valuable complementary program for us. It provides peace of mind for all our customers, whether they're closely monitoring their water usage or not. Our customers truly appreciate the financial security it offers when unexpected leaks occur."

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Leaks and ServLine Claims are Still Happening

The following EWWSB data illustrates that ServLine claims in the 12 months following AMI rollout exceed those of the 22 months before AMI.

Date range of claims	Number of claims	Value of claims
Sept. 2022 – July 2024	104	\$27,166.60
Aug. 2024 – Aug. 2025	101	\$30,042.43

This data illustrates that, post-AMI, ServLine continues to deliver vital financial protection to residents, as claim incidences have increased, accompanied by a slight rise in the average claim amount. However, as EWWSB’s customer portal for meter insight is fully deployed and functional, claim values may be reduced because customers have direct access to their usage in real-time.

Conclusion

Advanced Metering Infrastructure represents a critical step forward in modern water management, offering significant potential for earlier leak detection, resource conservation, and operational efficiency. However, its phased rollout, consumer usage challenges, and inability to eliminate leaks emphasize the need for complementary solutions.

Programs like ServLine fortify the effectiveness of AMI, shielding customers from financial strain and mitigating regulatory compliance risks for utilities. Together, AMI and ServLine exemplify an integrated approach to achieving both technological innovation and community resilience in water management systems. For cities like Eufaula, this combined strategy ensures all bases are covered, creating a more sustainable and customer-centric future.



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