



# New Jersey Natural Gas Installs Itron Field Collection System in Record Time

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### BACKGROUND

New Jersey Natural Gas (NJNG) is the principal subsidiary of New Jersey Resources (NYSE:NJR), a Fortune 1000 company and a member of the Forbes Platinum 400. NJNG is one of the fastest-growing local distribution companies in the United States, serving more than 471,000 customers in New Jersey's Monmouth, Ocean, Middlesex and Morris counties.

### OPPORTUNITY

As a leader in the competitive energy marketplace, New Jersey Natural Gas continuously looks at opportunities to maximize operational efficiency at their utility. NJNG has been an Itron customer since the production debut of field order dispatch systems in the early 1980s. At NJNG, providing exceptional service requires flexible end-to-end solutions that reliably collect meter data enabling them to deliver accurate information back to their customers in a timely manner.

Utilities are migrating to technologies that provide seamless integration with existing billing systems, advanced meter data management systems, and workforce management solutions. NJNG decided to invest in a state-of-the-art, flexible and reliable meter reading system. Management and operations decided it was easier to replace the entire system rather than perform a Premierplus4 system update.

Organizational changes, maintenance costs, training support and resources are all factors that needed to be considered to determine which meter reading system application would prove most attractive for NJNG. "We knew to look at Itron for a meter reading system application because they have always provided us with strong customer support without the high maintenance and ownership costs that can be typical of software vendors in our industry," stated Rico Soccodato, an IT operations team member at NJNG. "When you have continuous organizational change, a system change-out is attractive. Itron's proven experience with this type of reading system change-out was a key selling point for us."

### CUSTOMER

New Jersey Natural Gas

### CHALLENGE

Replace an aged meter reading system with a modern meter reading system.

### SOLUTION

Itron's state-of-the-art open architecture Field Collection System

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**Rico Soccodato**

IT operations, New Jersey Natural Gas

## SOLUTION

NJNG decided in December 2006 to move forward with the purchase of Itron's Field Collection System (FCS) and replace their existing meter reading system. FCS is part of ChoiceConnect®, Itron's industry leading suite of walk-by, drive-by and network technologies that work alone or together to meet customer's specific objectives.

“As we considered expanding to full AMR, we needed a meter reading system that would provide a clear migration path to meeting future needs. This system needed to work with a portfolio of AMR technologies,” said Soccodato.

To maximize on their investment in Itron FC200 handhelds, NJNG quickly wrapped up the contract in December and gave Itron the green light to immediately start the installation in January 2007.

Keeping billing and reading operations uninterrupted at NJNG was a priority. “First, we prepared our teams internally with clear details on requirements for the install. Our goal was to get our IT group organized and get as many transitions in progress prior to Itron's first site visit,” Soccodato said. “The effort on our side from an applications perspective played a very large role in setting our utility up for a successful installation. What makes us successful is working straight out of the gate on understanding the applications environment and how the technical staff works.”

Typically, a meter reading system conversion takes four to six months. The project began February 27, 2007 and finished on April 16, 2007. Itron and NJNG had the installation complete and all offices operating in production in only seven weeks—an unprecedented time frame for implementation.

## BENEFITS

When considering FCS, a major selling point for NJNG was being able to maintain their existing interface system. NJNG found they could deploy FCS without costly internal IT or third-party software customizations. The installation was seamless.

Further expediting the process was a recent enhancement to FCS that allows the application server to import and export Premiereplus4 MRI files. This allows the utility to change out the meter reading system without the need to program a new CIS interface. The feature is built into FCS and controlled by a parameter selected by the customer, who can switch to native FCS XML file interfaces at any time in the future with no need to install or uninstall any software.

As utilities continue to focus on operational efficiency and the need to keep up with the latest software programming standards, Itron ChoiceConnect AMR technology offers utilities the system flexibility they need. The exclusive suite presents utility customers with an interchangeable, interoperable solution that they can customize to fit their ever-changing and expanding needs.



At Itron, we're dedicated to delivering end-to-end smart grid and smart distribution solutions to electric, gas and water utilities around the globe. Our company is the world's leading provider of smart metering, data collection and utility software systems, with over 8,000 utilities worldwide relying on our technology to optimize the delivery and use of energy and water. Our offerings include electricity, gas, water and heat meters; network communication technology; collection systems and related software applications; and professional services.

To realize your smarter energy and water future, start here: [www.itron.com](http://www.itron.com)

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