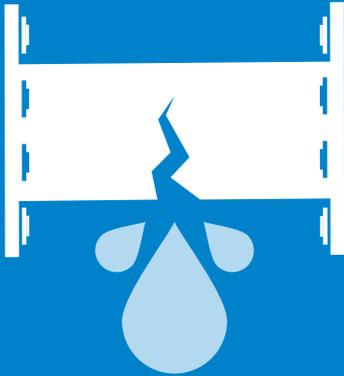**CASE STUDY**

Little Egg Harbor Builds Customer Trust through Sensus Technology

Utility increases operational efficiency and fosters customer relationships using FlexNet

The LEHMUA building is home to a dedicated team, committed to building longstanding relationships with their more than 8,000 customers.

Leaking pipes cause damage and headaches

Imagine it's winter in Little Egg Harbor, New Jersey and temperatures drop to the low twenties by sundown. Summery, beach weather is nowhere to be seen in this coastal town and most residents have fled to warmer temperatures until summer returns. Water pipes can't flock to warmer temperatures though, and while homeowners are gone, pipes can easily freeze and burst.

If a pipe bursts and floods an unoccupied house, the leak could go unnoticed until a passerby sees water running outside of the home. At this point, the damage is done.

"No one wants to deal with the stress of recovering from water damage," said Earl Sutton, executive director, **Little Egg Harbor Municipal Utilities Authority (LEHMUA)**. "We'd had enough of our customers' homes being damaged. We knew we had to do something to help detect issues, like pipe bursts or leaks, and notify customers about them more quickly."

A growing vacation destination

Little Egg Harbor is located just minutes from the Atlantic Ocean. With more than 8,000 households and counting, the seaside town is quickly becoming a popular vacation home destination.

Challenge
Improve customer service and operations

Solution
Take action using data from the Sensus FlexNet communication network

Reach Farther
Foster longstanding relationships with customers no matter what challenges are ahead

As the vacation spot expands, so does the possibility of potentially damaging and expensive scenarios for property owners and the utility to consider. For instance, if there is a pipe burst or leak, how long would it take major damage to occur? What if the utility could monitor water consumption in real time? What if data alerted them to a leak or pipe burst?

Sending messages and reaping benefits

With the Sensus FlexNet® communication network, answers to these questions are now within the utility's reach. The utility relies on the FlexNet system to monitor water use and directly alert customers to abnormal consumption patterns via email, text or phone call at any time of day.

In addition to alerts, the utility uses consumption data to:

- Provide more accurate and reliable service
- Monitor all of its 9,000 water meters 24/7
- Ensure accurate bills
- Improve operational efficiency and save water

Building trust with customers

The Sensus technology also empowers LEHMUA to build trust with the people of Little Egg Harbor. For instance, the utility saw an unusual spike in one customer's water consumption last fall. The customer's daily water use exceeded 1,000 gallons. Right away, the customer was alerted to the problem—and discovered a toilet that was running. Had the problem persisted, their water bill that month would have gone through the roof. The homeowner was extremely grateful for the call.

"With consistent monitoring and communication capabilities, FlexNet makes it possible for us to show that we care," said Sutton. "Whether it's a leaky faucet or frozen pipe, at the end of the day, our customers are happy we're there looking out for them."

Standing tall against the storm

The utility knew it needed a solution to alert local homeowners to pipe bursts. Little did they know how much FlexNet would also help them overcome a natural disaster.

After Superstorm Sandy hit the Jersey Shore in the fall of 2012, many residents suffered devastating property damage or lost their homes entirely.

More than three feet of water accumulated in the home of Ed Andrews, a 10-year customer of LEHMUA, leaving

After Superstorm Sandy, LEHMUA relied on the FlexNet network to prioritize relief efforts and quickly restore service to the devastated area.

his water meter submerged. "While my service was never disrupted, the meter still needed to be replaced," said Andrews. "Fortunately, the folks at my utility changed out the meter in a timely manner at no cost."

Using FlexNet to prioritize relief efforts and identify the most heavily impacted areas, LEHMUA was able to replace water meters proactively. The utility addressed problems quickly and efficiently, all while maintaining consistent communication with customers about its restoration efforts.

Technology built to last

Because the FlexNet system is scalable, LEHMUA can continue to monitor its customers' water consumption and alert them of issues for years to come.

"No matter if we experience another hurricane or harsh winter, our customers can rest assured knowing that we will go right to them and address an issue before receiving a complaint," said Sutton. "We take great comfort knowing that FlexNet will only continue to support the longstanding partnerships we've created."