

TeleWare Case Study



THREE VALLEYS WATER

At Three Valleys Water, an innovative solution from TeleWare has enabled its Operations Centre to improve efficiency whilst providing increased support to workers and fulfil its statutory duty of care.

Operational Control

From the Three Valleys Water Operations Centre near Watford, engineers are responsible for managing the integrity of its various facilities across some 380 sites throughout its supply region. Three Valleys Water takes security extremely seriously, and has rigorous systems in place to ensure that the water treatment and distribution process cannot be tampered with. Telemetry systems monitor over 24,000 points and engineers must respond to any alarms to ascertain their cause and take appropriate action. Whilst some alarms are genuine and might require someone to be sent on-site to investigate and rectify, many are triggered by operatives attending site to carry out routine maintenance work. Typical examples might include triggering a security alarm on entering a building, lifting an inspection cover at a pumping station or adjusting a control valve at a sluice gate.

Prior to the installation of the TeleWare Lone Worker system, operatives would telephone the Operations Centre to notify control engineers of their arrival on-site and the job number they were about to work on. They would say how long they expected to remain on-site and would call the ops centre again on departure.

Three Valleys Water is the UK's largest water supply only company and is part of Veolia Water, the world leader in water and wastewater management.

Three Valleys Water has been supplying water to the local community for more than 130 years and is committed to delivering a high quality water service to all its customers. It now provides over 860 million litres of water each day to three million customers in parts of Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Surrey and the London Boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon and Enfield. The supply area covers a total of 3,700 square kilometres stretching from Luton and Royston in the north to Guildford in the south, and from Berkhamsted in the west to Dunmow in the east.

These details were keyed into a database such that, if an alarm was triggered, engineers could quickly ascertain whether anyone was on-site at that time and, if appropriate, could contact them regarding the incident.

Although this procedure had worked reasonably well in the past it meant that, particularly early on in the working day, the operations centre was receiving a high number of calls from remote workers, simply to notify their arrival on-site. If a call could not be answered personally by operations staff (because they were already dealing with other calls), a voicemail service allowed the field operative to leave a message. However, in these cases, an alarm might be triggered before operations staff had been able to play the message and enter details of the job being carried out at that location into the database.

With the planned consolidation of its two former operations centres into the one facility at Bushey, it was felt that a more efficient method of recording the allocation and status of jobs was required.

TeleWare Develops Customised Solution

Three Valleys Water had already been using a TeleWare communications platform for a number of years to provide voicemail and mobility solutions for some 500 staff within the business. Terry Fosbrook, Telecommunications Manager at the organisation's Hatfield head office, was impressed with the services from TeleWare and felt the company might be able to offer a solution for Three Valleys. An earlier trial of TeleWare's standard Lone Worker application had not been adopted but Terry and colleagues worked with TeleWare's development team to specify a product more suited to their present needs. As Terry explains, "TeleWare showed a willingness to work with us to develop their previous solution into a product we could use effectively in our Operations Centre."

The TeleWare solution has cut the number of telephone calls needing to be answered by Operations Centre staff considerably – one estimate was by as much as 75% - allowing duty engineers to focus on dealing with real issues more efficiently in order to maintain essential services and meet the stringent quality standards common to the industry. "At the same time", points out Control Engineer Dave Redington, "We are able to better support our people when they are working alone with a system that automatically alerts us of an unexpected situation."

Operation Overview

When operatives arrive on-site they now make a brief telephone call from their mobile phone into TeleWare's automated call-handling system. The operative is identified by their mobex number and they are prompted to key in a three-digit site code to show their current location and, optionally, the job number they are working against. At this point, a voicemail message may be recorded for operations staff or the operative can elect to speak directly with an engineer by pressing the appropriate key on his or her phone. The caller then has the option of setting their call-back time or accepting the default period. If they don't make another call into the system within the set time period, an alarm is raised within the Operations Centre and engineers can take prescribed measures.



Intuitive Interface Accessible Remotely via Intranet

A key feature of the TeleWare solution is the presentation of the current registration status of each operative on display screens within the Operations Centre in a graphical form. Like the telemetry monitoring system, colour coded icons are used in addition to audible alarms to highlight issues requiring attention by Operations Centre staff. As status information is displayed in a browser window, this is also accessible by team leaders, site managers and other authorised staff via the Three Valleys Water intranet in order to inform their decision-making.

Another useful feature is the ability of operations staff to 'tag' on-screen against the names of operatives they need to speak with. Next time a 'tagged' operative makes a call into the TeleWare system they will be automatically connected with the Operations Centre for a voice

call. The operative also receives an automatically generated text message via SMS (Short Message Service) alerting them to the fact that Operations staff need to speak with them when convenient. This makes it unnecessary for operations staff to disturb the operative in the middle of a job with non-urgent calls.

What Next?

Such has been the success of the TeleWare solution within Three Valleys Water that proposals are in place to broaden its use within the organisation and to introduce the service into other companies within the Veolia Water group.

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