

Case Study

Boosting the Productivity of Residential Meter Readers

UTILITIES

Georgia Power



According to Jeff Butterworth, Field Service Supervisor for Georgia Power, the company's experience with the Segway® Personal Transporter goes back to the earliest days when few people knew what the Segway PT was or how it operated.

"We began a pilot program with two PTs in early 2002 that was designed to test the capability of the Segway PT to shorten the time it took our meter readers to cover their routes," says Butterworth. "We believed that there were certain routes where the spacing between the houses was too wide for walking and too short for vehicle use, for which these new machines would be ideal. And that is exactly what we found. In addition, we found that the PT could be used on virtually any walking route we had. A little over a year later we purchased five more machines."

Typically, Georgia Power meter readers tackle their routes in one of two ways: Either they drive to the start of the route and walk it, or they drive to each house, park their vehicle, get out and read the meter, re-start their vehicle and drive to the next house. Routes range in length from six to ten miles.

"We have found that the Segway PT provides measurable time savings ranging anywhere from 15 minutes to two hours depending on the make up of the route. But we've also found other advantages in their use, most importantly those relating to safety," says Butterworth. "For example, if a route is covered by a Field Service Representative (FSR) in a pick-up truck, there are inherent dangers

in backing out of dozens and dozens of driveways each day. These dangers are eliminated with the Segway PT. In addition, you have reduced fatigue. There are also environmental benefits given that the Segway PT does not use any gasoline or motor oil."

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Executive Summary

THE CHALLENGE

- Enable residential meter readers to cover their routes more quickly
- Increase the safety of residential meter readers as they move from house to house

THE SOLUTION

- Purchase seven Segway PTs and employ them on six different field service regions
- Train a large group of residential meter readers on the Segway PTs so they can use the units as their jobs demand

BENEFITS TO THE CUSTOMER

- Reduced the route completion time by 15 minutes to two hours depending on the structure of the route
- Reduced fatigue among residential meter readers
- Increased the safety of the job by eliminating the need to back out of driveways in a large vehicle
- Generated environmental benefits by reducing the use of gasoline-powered vehicles

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SEGWAY
Simply moving

Today, Georgia Power spreads the use of their seven Segway PTs over six of their field service regions, and the units are in high demand. "Basically, our FSRs look at the routes that need to be covered each day and decide among themselves who will use the Segway PT. I can tell you this, they love using the machines and the discussions on who gets the Segway PT get pretty lively."

Raul Gutierrez, a Sr. Field Service Representative with Georgia Power, believes the Segway PT has changed his approach to his job. "Not only does it help me in the field, but with the extra time gained it allows me to go help others," says Gutierrez. "I joke with customers that it is so much fun to use that I should be paying the company to do my job."

According to Butterworth, the meter readers are also excited about the new extended-range lithium-ion batteries they have ordered from Segway Inc. "We tried a set of the new batteries this summer and it doubled the range of the unit," says Butterworth. "This means that we'll be able to go longer between recharging and cover longer routes than we have in the past. This should increase our use of the Segway PT in the future and I can see us acquiring more machines each year as budgets permit." ■

