



DATAVOICE HELPS STEELE-WASECA OVERCOME DISPATCHING TURBULENCE

ABOUT:

Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric in Owatonna, Minnesota, serves more than 11,400 commercial and residential customers throughout nine separate service districts located just south of Minneapolis. Founded in 1938 following the passage and implementation of the Rural Electrification Act, the organization now generates approximately 2,400 kilowatts of power per member, per month.

CHALLENGES:

The cooperative had long depended on around-the-clock dispatching services provided by a neighboring electric company. However, this organization announced that it intended to discontinue this service in 2018, forcing Steele-Waseca to search for an alternative dispatching option. The cooperative contracted with the Cooperative Response Center as a stopgap measure but soon realized that a more robust solution incorporating outage mapping, something the CRC could not provide, was required. Steele-Waseca Line Manager Dan Meier embarked on the search for an effective outage management system.

“We had to put something in our linemen’s hands that would give them the information they needed to make the best possible decision in the field,” he explained.

After assessing his options, Meier decided to partner with dataVoice International.

SOLUTION:

The software provider assessed the situation and proposed a solution package that included the company’s OMS platform and lineman mobile application. Meier and his colleagues at Steele-Waseca looked over the proposal and opted to move forward with implementation. This process unfolded smoothly due, in part, to the cooperative’s then-recent GPS and inventory optimization efforts, which yielded fresh field information channels ideal for OMS integration. However, the lineman application deployment process was more challenging as a result of internal resistance among field crews, which Meier ultimately tied to the sudden disappearance of the responsive dispatch services Steele-Waseca



received through its neighboring cooperative and then CRC. Ultimately, the organization overcame this roadblock by working with dataVoice to provide effective training programs and simply putting the on-the-go tool in linemen's hands as quickly as possible.

The implementation process ended in July 2018, at which point Steele-Waseca went live with the dataVoice OMS and the lineman mobile application.

OUTCOMES:

A mere two months after the cooperative rolled out these new solutions, multiple tornadoes moved into the area, knocking out power to 7,000 customers. With access to the dataVoice OMS and application-equipped linemen, Steele-Waseca operations was able to address all of the outages with immense efficiency and speed.

“We were able to coordinate 15 crews with minimal office staff during the storm and that was a testament to

dataVoice,” Meier said. “The OMS made it so easy to analyze the situation, track trucks and monitor close-outs. All of this happened on a Thursday night and we had everyone back online by Sunday.”

In the months since those storms passed through Southern Minnesota, the OMS and the lineman application have continued to exceed expectations, lending Meier never-before-seen operational agility. In addition to appreciating the operational capabilities that come with deploying dataVoice solutions, Meier admires the company's approach to customer service.

“They make products that benefit individual cooperatives,” he explained. “When you come to them with a problem, they listen and do whatever they can do to make you successful.”