

Safeguarding the Interests of Coop  
Members with Oracle Utilities  
Customer Care and Billing for  
Electric Cooperatives

# Safeguarding the Interests of Coop Members with Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Electric Cooperatives

**“As our business continues to experience significant growth, we continue to cultivate business partnerships that offer sound technical solutions to support our critical customer care function. We believe we have found that strategic partner in [Oracle’s] SPL.”**

**—Jason Gordon  
Manager of Customer  
Accounting, Lee County  
Electric Cooperative**

## **ADJUST TO CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS**

For more than a century, energy cooperatives have provided electricity to rural members and safeguarded the economic welfare and growth of their communities. Today, however, radical shifts in market conditions and a transformation of your member base present major challenges.

Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Electric Cooperatives lets you respond positively and productively to member needs no matter how your market evolves. By providing comprehensive system support for all member- and billing-centric operations, it enables you to manage multifaceted relationships, respond to regulatory and marketplace directives, and minimize the risks of competing in an industry in flux.

## **MIGRATE TO FLEXIBLE BUSINESS PROCESSES**

Rural populations are becoming increasingly suburbanized. This means that you must swiftly adapt to meet new demands from new type of members. Escalating energy prices are forcing you to implement demand-side and demand-response management programs that conserve energy and help your members maintain competitiveness. You may even be facing the all-important decision about whether to join other utilities to transition to a competitive market.

Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Electric Cooperatives allows you to meet these challenges by changing direction quickly (sometimes overnight), expanding your service offerings, and making rate adjustments without having to implement cumbersome coding changes to the system.

## **SATISFY ALL MEMBER REQUIREMENTS**

Your members have operational, financial, and energy needs that you must strive to meet. By offering energy conservation loans, special rates for niche groups, energy audits, low-cost equipment and repairs, and member credit cards, you provide economic support that strengthens your community financially. Additionally, ensuring that members get capital credits on time at low cost facilitates growth and reinforces member commitment to your organization.

Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Electric Cooperatives enables you to do all this and more. The system allows you to offer demand-response and complex energy data management services as needed to conserve energy and fight grid congestion. It also enables you to facilitate large customers' access to the wholesale grid.

**“We provide over a dozen products to our rapidly growing member base in the Georgia marketplace. While we have had success in adapting our existing systems to an increasing number of products and services, we recognized that we needed a more strategic and cost-effective platform going forward.”**

**—Bob Arnett  
Vice President, Information  
Technology, Cobb Energy**

### **Optimize Cash Flow**

Electric cooperatives must minimize the time it takes to turn water usage into billing statements, and billing statements into cash. Members pay more quickly when they receive easy-to-read, accurate bills that are timed to coordinate with the availability of financial resources, and that fit into their schedules for disbursing funds for monthly expenses.

Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Electric Cooperatives allows you to do all this plus monitor debt levels, adjust collection methods to the specific financial situations of individual members, and better manage deposits to speed payments and reduce uncollected debt. Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Electric Cooperatives also allows you to

- Ensure bill accuracy by automatically identifying and resolving issues before sending out billing statements
- Send consolidated bills to a central corporate office and individual bills to service outlets
- Give multiproduct members converged bills that combine various products and services
- Provide large industry members with electronic data tables they can manipulate
- Tailor bill formats according to member preferences
- Provide easy-to-understand billing graphs that show how energy consumption varies over member-specified time periods
- Let members choose the end date for their billing cycles
- Offer a choice of bill and payment methods, including e-mail, internet, cash deposit, direct debit, and postal service

### **Cut Costs While Improving Customer Service Quality**

The call center is the lifeblood of your member service strategy. It is the primary conduit through which your members contact you, and your first—and best—method for responding in a way that communicates your dedication to delivering the best possible quality of care. You simply can't afford to sacrifice service quality when pursuing cost-cutting goals.

**“We’d heard a lot of horror stories about upgrades. But we did two of them in the year following our implementation. What’s probably most interesting was what didn’t happen. We didn’t have to shut down the call center or suspend processes, so we didn’t have orders and other work that had to be postponed or redone after the upgrade. We didn’t have to change any of the interfaces between the customer care and billing system and other programs.”**

**—Sterling Schoonover  
Director of Customer Service,  
Rappahannock Electric  
Cooperative**

Yet your call center personnel may still be dependent on outdated legacy systems or even manual processes for accessing member records. This makes it difficult—if not impossible—for them to respond quickly to member queries. Likewise, data collection and billing errors can take significant amounts of time to properly research, and often require calling members back hours or even days after the initial call. Not only does this frustrate members—who want to resolve problems immediately—but it is an extremely costly and nonproductive use of your call center workers’ time.

Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Electric Cooperatives streamlines call center activities, increasing member satisfaction while significantly reducing costs. Among other benefits, the system allows you to

- Shorten call times and significantly cut down on callbacks by giving call center staff members complete and immediate access to member account histories
- Help members lower energy costs by providing them with data management, smart metering, and complex billing services
- Leverage contract management capabilities to offer more options to commercial and industrial members
- Minimize employee training time through an intuitive user interface, online help, and prewritten scripts to handle the most-common service scenarios
- Increase the productivity of call center workers, reducing the need for personnel and dramatically cutting employee costs
- Steer members to alternate sources of help via integrated voice response systems and self-service Web sites
- Spread call volumes out over the month by varying billing cycles of member accounts

### **Automate Field Service Functions**

Field service tasks, such as establishing new connections, dispatching field personnel to make special reads, and performing final reads, are activities that are routinely performed every day. You can reap enormous efficiencies and dramatically reduce costs by completing these basic operations accurately the first time. With Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Electric Cooperatives you can

- Book service appointments with ease, automate service-order dispatch, and assign appropriate personnel to emergency service calls
- Upload and download data to handheld devices
- Enable field personnel to report when service tasks have been completed, helping you optimize available resources and use of employee time

## **Effectively Manage Change**

Unparalleled scalability means that the system grows as you do, and easily adapts to market disruptions. With Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Electric Cooperatives you can

- Support growth in your member base by scaling readily from a few thousand members to millions
- Create “what if” scenarios that provide realistic options for members, executives, and community leaders
- Quickly generate reports that identify the effects of program changes on community consumption and grid use

## **Reduce Total Cost of System Ownership**

Upgrading systems requires extensive personnel time, which results in high costs but often fails to produce tangible benefits. Energy industry average expenses for upgrading customer care applications can exceed US\$20 per customer. With SPL Customer Care & Billing for Electric Cooperatives, a full upgrade costs less than US\$2 per member. Upgrading individual components costs less than four cents per customer.

SPL Customer Care & Billing for Electric Cooperatives has a number of key features that help minimize total cost of ownership, including

- Low-cost archiving that stores and protects data over its entire lifecycle
- Tracking and automated workflow processing
- A configuration lab that moves data safely from testing to production
- A robust architecture that supports internal business process engineering initiatives

## **MANAGE RISK**

Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Electric Cooperatives integrates easily with enterprise software solutions and legacy systems. By delivering detailed data analysis and reporting capabilities right to your desktop, you have access to predefined key performance indicators as well as templates that help you attain industry best practices. Decision makers have real-time access to integrated views of all customer-care and billing activities through intuitive and easy-to-use dashboards. By condensing volumes of complex disparate data from multiple sources into a comprehensive knowledgebase, Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Electric Cooperatives enables you to more efficiently identify risks, recognize trends, and effectively forecast emerging competitive challenges to reduce costs and grow revenues despite a constantly evolving industry.

## **CONTACT US**

For more information on Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing, call +1.800.ORACLE1 to speak to an Oracle representative, or visit [oracle.com/industries/utilities](http://oracle.com/industries/utilities).



---

## UTILITIES

Safeguarding the Interests of Energy Coop Members  
with Oracle Utilities Customer Care and Billing for Electric Cooperatives  
August 2007

Oracle Corporation  
World Headquarters  
500 Oracle Parkway  
Redwood Shores, CA 94065  
U.S.A.

Worldwide Inquiries:  
Phone: +1.650.506.7000  
Fax: +1.650.506.7200  
[oracle.com](http://oracle.com)

Copyright © 2007, Oracle. All rights reserved.

This document is provided for information purposes only and the contents hereof are subject to change without notice.

This document is not warranted to be error-free, nor subject to any other warranties or conditions, whether expressed orally or implied in law, including implied warranties and conditions of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. We specifically disclaim any liability with respect to this document and no contractual obligations are formed either directly or indirectly by this document. This document may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, for any purpose, without our prior written permission.

Oracle is a registered trademark of Oracle Corporation and/or its affiliates. Other names may be trademarks of their respective owners.