



## BULLETIN — 106

### Keeping Water Flowing in a Growing Town — Without Breaking the Budget

Flowery Branch, Georgia, is facing tremendous growth as suburban Atlanta continues to sprawl. The community's water and wastewater systems must prepare to support new residents and businesses while keeping costs in check.

The current system serves 1,670 sewer-use customers across approximately 18 square miles, providing 550,000 to 600,000 gallons of wastewater treatment each day through its network of eight lift stations, and another 220,000 gallons per day at a water booster station.

Flowery Branch recently approved building 890 new homes within the city limits, plus the possibility of an additional 1,200 homes in adjacent areas — all of which will be served by the Water/Wastewater Department. To support all that growth, the community plans to build an additional four pump stations in the coming years.

#### Growing Pains

As the service area grows, so will the challenges. The department has relied on RACO Verbatim® units for years. However, the costs of installing and maintaining new phone lines are unsustainable as more remote locations come online.

Meanwhile, the small staff of just seven full-time employees must spend more time (plus gas and wear and tear) driving to increasingly remote stations to ensure the system is functioning properly.

#### AlarmAgent® Cuts Costs, Boosts Reporting

Water/Wastewater Director Jimmy Dean is charged with managing this growth while also balancing budgets of both the city and county. He has trusted RACO equipment for years, so Dean engaged RACO to find a smarter way to monitor the growing network while containing costs.

AlarmAgent was the logical choice, with cloud-based alarms and monitoring that can span a larger area at a lower cost than traditional landlines. Dean's team handled the simple installation, and the AlarmAgent units fit directly into the existing panels with no need for modifications.

Now that the system is live, Dean explains, "We count on AlarmAgent to tell us what is going on with the stations.



Lift stations at the Flowery Branch facility

"When we were dependent on phone lines, we went to check each station daily. Now that we receive a Watchdog Report first thing every morning from AlarmAgent, we only go out to the station three days per week, twice to check it and once for maintenance and cleanup."

The AlarmAgent system is helping Flowery Branch save over \$9,000 just in annual phone line costs, not to mention the hassle, hours and mileage of driving to each station. In fact, Dean noted that the cost savings alone have bought several units while improving up time and awareness. AlarmAgent monthly monitoring services run just \$30 per station, compared to \$115 per month per station for landline-based monitoring.

The team can now monitor all pumps remotely and be alerted when anything is amiss — before the problem escalates. AlarmAgent can also help the team assess which pumps are working near or beyond capacity, enabling preventative maintenance and rebalancing of the system. As Dean notes, "When my electric bill comes in and I notice it is unusually high, I can go back and look at my pump run times and see where the problems are — another savings to the county."



**Lift stations at the Flowery Branch facility**

AlarmAgent has empowered the Flowery Branch department to ditch paper logbooks for automated reporting that offers far more information, including a dashboard full of vital details. Cloud-based alarms instantly notify the entire team, with customizable notification preferences that best use staff time.

#### **Integrating Technology to Scale for the Future**

As Flowery Branch and the surrounding area continue to grow, the Water/Wastewater Department is focused on further integrating technology into its daily work. Team members are learning how technology can help them pinpoint potential problems, schedule proactive maintenance, and be more efficient overall.

Flowery Branch's AlarmAgent implementation has plenty of capacity for additional alarms and channels as needs change. The team may add more monitoring conditions, such as phase loss, bearing temperature, or unused capacity. Automation will help the team scale to handle the area's growth in 2020 and beyond — while the RACO team will be available to help plan for even more demand.



Phone: (800) 722-6999 • Fax: (510) 658-3153  
Website: [racoman.com](http://racoman.com)  
1400 62nd Street, Emeryville, CA 94608

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