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Technology Advances in Sub-Metering

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Changes in technology are everywhere in our lives these days. I'll bet the smartphone you have in your pocket today can perform many more useful features and functions than the one you used 5 or 10 years ago. Technology improvements are also found in our cars, at our work places, and in our homes. Today's electronic products do more, run faster, and are better networked than ever before. Technology advancements are also driving a revolution of new equipment and services in the sub-metering industry for multifamily applications.

What is sub-metering? Accurate allocation of utility usage is a common problem for many property owners and managers. The State of Washington allows you to meter your tenants individually and then charge them for the actual amount they've used. This process is called sub-metering. You still pay your normal utility bills as you always have been, but now you get to recover that cost by billing your tenants for their usage as measured on the new individual meters.

Sub-metering has been popular since the early 90's and currently many properties have metering systems that were installed years ago. Some older systems may rely on manually reading the meters each month. Others may have old technology Automated Meter Reading (AMR) equipment that is no longer reliable or the components are obsolete. Most installed systems still use a dial up modem for remote connectivity. They can only be accessed by 3rd party billing companies that use old proprietary software that is not available to the building owner or manager.

New sub-metering systems offer many advantages, such as:

- Meters are accurate, long lasting and feature automated meter reading technology built in.
- Reliable wireless meter reading systems eliminate the need to run wires to each meter.
- Systems are tailored to small properties as well as large properties.
- Internet or cellular based connectivity is typical for remotely accessing the meter data.
- Web based software is available that can provide daily meter readings and usage data with graphs to owners and managers.
- Many systems also offer features like water leak detection that can email alerts to the manager.

One of the best features of all is that the cost of purchasing and installing a new sub-metering system has never been lower. Equipment is easier to install. Systems are now available that are preconfigured before they ship and can be pulled out of the box and installed directly by the end user without the need of a special technician. You can even reduce recurring monthly costs like eliminating a dedicated telephone line that is connected to your existing old system.

Sub-metering is not just for large properties anymore. Products such as the NoWire™ wireless submetering system with cellular based remote connectivity offer sub-metering of smaller properties even down to a duplex at affordable prices. Typical return on investment for a new sub-metering system is less than one year.

Web based services like MeterData™ also provide a powerful tool to the property owner or manager. MeterData displays the property's

daily meter readings and utility consumption and makes this available directly to the property manager whenever they need it. The user can also drill down to see each individual tenant's daily usage on an easy to read graph and with one click export this data into Excel.

Is your existing sub-metering system operating like that old flip phone you used in the 90's? Are you frustrated that you can't get the data you need when you need it? Tired of finding out about a leaky toilet weeks too late to do anything about it? Perhaps you don't yet have a submetering system at your property because you've always thought they were too expensive or your building was too small. I encourage you to visit our booth at this year's TRENDS Conference and Trade Show on December 10th in Seattle. We'll show you examples of sub-metering systems and demonstrate MeterData™ for you.

Kelly Koontz is Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Submeter Solutions, Inc. Submeter Solutions is based in Issaquah, WA and has been an Associate Member of RHAWA since 2007. Since 1999, Submeter Solutions has been selling, servicing and installing electric, gas and water utility meters and sub-metering systems locally and nationally. They also provide Third Party Billing services for multi-tenant properties. Information about Submeter Solutions is available at www.submetersolutions.com or 888-64-METER. ♦