



## **Promoting Reliability, Emergency Preparedness & Response**

Emergency response is a fundamental part of utility operations, and disasters that lead to large-scale service outages are part of the reason why utilities build such robust communications networks – these systems are vital to rapid and safe restoration. In the aftermath of events like Hurricane Katrina and the 2003 Blackout, utilities are under increased demand from their customers to provide new and improved services, while at the same time they face increased security threats from abroad. Meeting these challenges in the near term – while continuing to respond to emergencies at the same time – will require implementing new and advanced communications systems to promote energy efficiency, reliability and security. Utilities recognize this and are investing heavily in intelligent networks that “see” faults when – or even before – they occur, thereby making the network virtually “self-healing”. Similarly, they are improving monitoring and control of distribution networks to make them more efficient. Automated metering and demand response systems are just some of the ways that utilities are improving efficiency; upgraded voice and data networks also will be needed.

UTC is working to raise awareness about the importance of utility communications systems as part of a comprehensive strategy to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While utilities must meet increased demand, it is not a simple matter of increasing generation or transmission/distribution capacity. Advanced communications systems may offer a more practical near-term solution to meet increased demand more cost effectively and quickly. In terms of security, these systems can support video surveillance of critical components and active notification of any change in operation. Cyber security is equally important to protect against hacking or computer viruses that can cripple utility delivery systems or cause an accident.

UTC is involved with federal, state and local policymakers, as well as industry consortia, to educate them and gain their support for the improved utility networks that will be necessary over the next several years. These efforts have begun to lead to better recognition of the interdependencies between energy and water, and communications reliability and security. We also are working to improve coordination between traditional public safety and utility first responders during emergencies, as well as interoperability. As a result, policymakers are beginning to consider including utilities as part of emergency response planning. UTC will continue these efforts to protect existing utility communications systems and to promote the advancement of utility communications in the future.