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East Bay Municipal Utility District River Of Documents Flows Smoothly With Paragon Program Management System

The East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBM UD) operates an extensive water works system that supplies water to approximately 1.3 million residents of Northern California's Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. With pipelines, filter plants, pumping stations, and reservoirs spread across a 325-square-mile area, EBM UD faces the daily challenge of staying on top of the construction and maintenance responsibilities associated with keeping water flowing to its customers.

To bring better management to the numerous construction projects going on within EBM UD at any given time, the district's Construction Division chose to integrate Paragon Program Management System into its construction management process in 1995. Kevin Canada, supervising administrative engineer for EBM UD's Construction Division, explains that, at that time, the division was in need of a software solution that could integrate all facets of construction management into a unified system that provided reporting and document control capabilities along with immediate access to cost and schedule information. Paragon proved to be that solution.

"We needed to streamline our contract administration duties so our staff could more effectively manage the myriad of construction projects under our jurisdiction," Canada said. "Using Paragon has been very helpful in terms of improving the way we do business within our section; it's helped us to standardize our reporting procedures and to become more efficient and better organized."

For example, I personally provide supervisory oversight on three to five active construction projects at a time. Before using Paragon, I would have to plow through a cabinet full of documents any time I needed to access previous correspondence for any given project. Now, with Paragon, my entire staff and I have easy, online access to the documents we need," he said. "We don't have to waste time sorting through files, nor do we have to keep hard copies on our desks or in our briefcases."

Paragon's ability to standardize and simplify the management of multi-faceted interdependent projects has helped the Construction Division streamline operations, and, today, Paragon is being used by EBM UD on capital improvement projects, including those managed by the Wastewater, Special Projects, and Seismic Improvement Divisions. According to Canada, it takes less time now to prepare reports. Additionally, he sees having the ability to distribute documents to contractors, subcontractors and project team members electronically as a means to substantially reduce the volume of paperwork associated with a given project.

For example, Paragon has reduced the time and expense needed to prepare payment invoices to a fraction of what it was before. "We are currently working on a project that contains a couple of hundred pay activities. So we simply feed the raw data into Paragon and it automatically computes how much is due each contractor and generates the necessary report documentation each month," Canada said. "It used to take about a week each month to complete the computations and

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Kevin Canada, EBM UD

paperwork needed to support the progress payment invoices with documents passing between five people,” he said. “Now, two or three people are able to complete this task in a couple of hours using Paragon.”

Canada also explained that, by providing online access to documents and communications, Paragon has enabled the Construction Division to streamline document distribution and retrieval. According to Canada, customized documents that are generated by Paragon for online review include: letters, transmittals, meeting minutes, request for information, change orders, progress payments and submittal reviews. The Construction Division also plans to use Paragon to post design drawings, schedules, specifications, photos and other related documents online.

“We are now testing posting documents to Web-based Paragon for retrieval instead of mailing hard copies of documents to project team members because we believe this function will be key to reducing paperwork and becoming even more efficient in the way we share information,” Canada said. “We’re currently implementing a process where contractors will be encouraged to forward project correspondence information electronically. The electronic document will be posted on the EBM UD Intranet site and all team members who need to review and comment on the information will be alerted via an e-mail. The District’s resident engineer will compile all review comments and generate a response in Paragon for electronic transmittal back to the contractor. This will save the team a substantial amount of time, and enable us to make the quick, informed decisions that are often required to keep construction programs on schedule and to avoid costly project delays.”

Since 1995, when it adopted Paragon, EBM UD has seen its flow of documents move more smoothly, its supervisors and engineers spend more time administering contracts and resolving problems and less time preparing and handling documents. In addition, by developing custom reports that are accessible to all users, EBM UD has benefited from being able to generate various construction documents in standardized formats.

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Kevin Canada, EBM UD

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