

# One employee, 114k assets

## How DEMCO handles massive workloads with Joint Use 365

Dixie Electric Membership Co. (DEMCO) is an electric cooperative based in Louisiana. It's one of the largest electric cooperatives in the US, as it serves power to over 114,000 customers across seven parishes.

In 2022, DEMCO noticed a significant uptick in utility pole joint use project requests. This resulted from several federal funding programs for nationwide broadband expansions, most notably the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF). Communications companies rely on

power distributors, like DEMCO, to share utility poles so they may implement broadband. This makes utility pole management and joint use processes imperative to effectively roll out high-speed internet.

To speed up broadband buildouts while streamlining and consolidating data, DEMCO chose to implement Joint Use 365. As a result, **DEMCO has reduced permit processing timelines by 80% while increasing data integrity and connectivity by channeling disparate systems into one unified hub.**

### Can Hiring A Joint Use Coordinator Accelerate Broadband Project Timelines?

In 2022, DEMCO management realized they had too much incoming workload. Before broadband funding programs, DEMCO's joint use processes were handled by multiple members of different teams. While juggling their day-to-day responsibilities, they also managed pole joint use billing, permitting, make-ready, and maintenance processes.

To ensure joint use projects didn't overwhelm the already busy managers, DEMCO leadership assigned Caleb the role of joint use coordinator. Caleb was a ten-year DEMCO serviceman.

His job was broad in scope: managing the joint use process from start to finish. But even as Caleb deftly handled every aspect of joint use, from facilitating attachment requests to make-ready estimates and more, DEMCO's outmoded joint use systems ultimately resulted in longer project timelines and difficulty handling the ever-increasing attachment requests.

**Hiring a dedicated joint use coordinator could only help so much. DEMCO needed a solution to modernize, automate, and streamline joint use projects.**



## DEMCO Chooses Joint Use 365 to Simplify Joint Use Processes

Caleb received an email from a coworker that contained information about joint use software. The software, called Joint Use 365, promised to streamline joint use, automate workflows, and integrate with GIS and other crucial back-office utility programs.

After receiving a demo of Joint Use 365, Caleb thoroughly investigated other vendors to ensure he was fully aware of all joint use software options.

**“I looked around as much as I could, but I couldn’t find anybody to consolidate my tasks like Joint Use 365. I still don’t know off the top of my head what other companies have a dedicated joint use asset program because this tool gave me everything we needed.”**

**-Caleb, Joint Use Coordinator, DEMCO**

In January 2023, DEMCO implemented Joint Use 365 on their Microsoft Azure tenant. Since then, Caleb has continued to refine Joint Use 365 to modernize, automate, and streamline DEMCO’s joint use processes and projects.

## Modernization Leads To Time-savings

DEMCO owns and manages over 135,000 utility poles, and until 2022, it processed attachment requests via paper submissions, emails, and spreadsheets.

**“We were keeping everything on Excel spreadsheets, doing all of our work through a tool that only managed service orders. We were still working with paper permits, email and phone calls, the whole ten yards,”**

**- Caleb, Joint Use Coordinator, DEMCO**

Prior to implementing the new software, processing each attachment request was laborious. Requests would come to Caleb through email as non-interactive PDF forms. Field technicians were required to physically check each pole to gather information, such as utility pole height and materials makeup, and to complete the form accurately. From start to finish, the permitting process took 14 to 15 days. The attachment request form would then go to management for approval or denial. If approved, the request would then go through a separate billing and cost estimate process before finally returning the sheet to the attacher with the make-ready cost estimates or denial.

Joint Use 365 eliminated PDF and paper permits. Caleb uses Joint Use 365 to process permits and make ready estimates, which he can assign directly to work crews to begin construction. This reduced permit processing periods to 3 days, 80% less time than the paper method. This allowed Caleb to maximize his productivity, completing more projects sooner, with better data.

## Automation Leads To Lighter Workloads

Before implementing Joint Use 365, DEMCO's GIS analyst had a very complex, time-consuming job. Every time an attachment was added to a DEMCO utility pole, he manually added the new attachment data. This wasted time and increased the likelihood of data entry errors. However, this issue became acute when DEMCO received a request for over 2,500 attachments due to the RDOF program.

Joint Use 365 automates the process by automatically adding the attachment data to the pole record and GIS after the permit is approved, significantly reducing the GIS analyst's workload.

Joint Use 365 also integrates with NJUNS, a commonly used notification system for the power and communications industries. DEMCO's largest attachers already use NJUNS with other utilities, so this integration streamlines the attachers' workload too.

**"Now, when an attachment request comes in, he only has to click one button, and all the data is seamlessly transferred to the GIS. With JU365, we can get attachers to go in through NJUNS, fill out the form, and JU365 sends all the attachment data to him immediately."**

**- Caleb, Joint Use Coordinator, DEMCO**

## Consolidation leads to data integrity

When data is spread across multiple systems and maintained by various parties, it gets out of sync. Before Joint Use 365, that was a problem Caleb faced every day. Documentation for contracts, billing, work orders, and asset records was spread across systems with no way to connect them. It was challenging to find the correct information for specific projects or accounts, especially if that data was received through email.

Joint Use 365 links all relevant information on assets together. Associated activities, projects, billing, and more are accessible nearly anywhere.

**"Joint Use 365 to us has really consolidated all of our information into one area. With Joint Use 365, I was able to configure a section for all of my invoices, and each attachment request is tied to that invoice automatically. There's no more hunting for information; it's all right there. It's made rental billing way, way easier."**

**- Caleb, Joint Use Coordinator, DEMCO**

## Joint Use 365, Built On



Power Apps



Power Automate



Azure Data Factory

## DEMCO's Future with Joint Use 365

The story of DEMCO's implementation of Joint Use 365 is a testament to the power of technology to streamline and modernize traditional processes. By adopting this all-in-one system, DEMCO has managed to reduce permit processing times by 80%, increase its data integrity, and streamline workflows for its joint use and GIS departments. The introduction of a joint use coordinator and the implementation of Joint Use 365 has proven to be a winning combination, enabling the company to maximize its productivity and complete more projects in less time.

**“Everybody in the industry has something specific that they’re looking for. But if they asked me, I would say Joint Use 365 is a must-have. It consolidates everything, making timelines a lot easier, and keeping up with attachment requests is easier. It’s just so easy.”**

**- Caleb, Joint Use Coordinator, DEMCO**

With Joint Use 365, DEMCO has transformed its joint use processes and future-proofed its operations to meet the needs of a fast-evolving broadband nation.



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**Joint Use 365**

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