



Case Study

San Diego Gas & Electric

San Diego Gas & Electric® (SDG&E®) is a regulated public utility that provides energy service to 3.6 million customers in the San Diego and southern Orange counties in California. SDG&E is a subsidiary of Sempra Energy (Sempra), a San Diego-based energy services holding company whose subsidiaries provide electricity, natural gas and value-added products and services.

SDG&E has been an AssetWorks FleetFocus customer for over 20 years and recently upgraded to the latest version of the system in August of 2020.

SDG&E operates a fleet of over 2,000 units, including highly specialized trucks, trailers and standard vehicles, and 12 maintenance locations spread throughout the San Diego area. Through their work, SDG&E manages and maintains 1.4 million electric meters and 873,000 natural gas residential meters across SDG&E’s 4,100 square miles of service area.



SDG&E makes significant use of the AssetWorks FleetFocus suite, including EquipmentFocus and the Notification Manager module. As a utility organization, SDG&E uses one aspect of FleetFocus in a unique way: SOX compliance and invoicing.

The Importance of Invoicing

Michal Swartz works as the Fleet Continuous Improvement Project Manager with SDG&E. She acted as the lead coordinator of the conversion work for SDG&E during the initial FleetFocus implementation.

SDG&E launched with the custom FleetFocus Invoice Approval module and Unit Attachment Query functionality to target seamless compliance with the Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) Act.

Before using FleetFocus for invoicing and SOX compliance, SDG&E originally developed an in-house process that populated an Excel spreadsheet when someone entered a part receipt or commercial charge into the fleet management system. “Herein lies the problem: our records of approval were stored in an Excel spreadsheet that could be manipulated or altered,” explained Swartz. “Auditors assessed the process and determined that, while the data was secure, more could be done to protect access to the data.”

SDG&E needed a method that would be SOX compliant. In this case, it required that the same individual could not both submit an invoice and subsequently approve it.

About the SOX Act:

The SOX Act stands for the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which was developed after the ENRON and WorldCom scandals to define acceptable practices for public companies. As stated in its preamble, the Act was intended to “protect investors by improving the accuracy and reliability of corporate disclosures made pursuant to the securities laws, and for other purposes.”

Named for co-sponsors Senators Sarbanes and Oxley, the Act became known by the nickname SOX over

time. Public utilities, like SDG&E, must maintain these standards in their business practices.

The SOX Compliant Solution for Innovative Invoicing

Within FleetFocus, many security layers exist to protect data integrity. Access to data in FleetFocus is strictly limited by the software-created and Administrator-defined roles. This includes the ability to see a full chain of command on the data, which is imperative to prove and maintain data integrity and an intact system of record for document retention. As a result, the team set out to develop the Invoice Approval module within FleetFocus to meet the business needs.

The module needed to ensure that only users with specific administrative roles and privileges would have access to the approval center for these items. This included the ability to reject the invoice outright or to send it back for correction, like adding a missing attachment. This drastically cuts time down as well, as the database recognizes instant notifications. As a result, vendor payment processing can occur much quicker, which may incentivize vendors to provide discounts to SDG&E.

Within the Invoice Approval module, advanced search tools make finding necessary data easy. Users can select their group (Fleet, Specific Location, etc.), receipt type (parts, fuel, etc.), specific vendors or by invoice number. Users can further refine the search by entering date parameters and whether the invoices were part of a contract.

The search results will display a chart that features critical information, including the Work Order number (with a link to the work order page), Invoice Number,



Vendor Name, Job ID and Status, cost, tax, total and interactable fields for the supervisors to accept or reject the invoice right from the search results fields.

Locating Invoices in Seconds

The Unit Attachment Query within FleetFocus allows users to search through attachments of these orders, so that the user can find an attachment on an as-needed basis. For SDG&E, this functionality has drastically sped up search times.

“Being able to quickly locate an attachment from any department throughout our thousands of invoices and parts receipts really makes a difference,” said Swartz

Before the Unit Attachment Query, the process was much more manual. An SDG&E employee would have to email a specific garage location for an invoice. With all of the garages and invoices spread across several thousand square miles of effective coverage range, obtaining a copy of an invoice could take hours or even days, especially if a particular garage was short-staffed. As a result, either the repair work would go on hold to locate an invoice, or the invoice retrieval would have to wait. “Now it’s all in [FleetFocus] and can be pulled up in a few seconds. It is a significant time-saver,” said Swartz.

Utilizing Efficiency in Practice

“Document retention is much more streamlined,” commented Swartz. “Following the 7-year recommended storage of invoicing, we have the ability to manage document retention electronically instead of involving staff at each location to physically inventory and/or send off the documents for destruction.” This ultimately creates a more efficient process for SDG&E so long as the invoices are entered into the database accurately.

All SDG&E technicians and part handlers use Microsoft Surface tablets with scanners to enter everything into FleetFocus immediately upon receipt. This process allows for non-editable documents, like PDFs and

JPGs, to be searchable in the system. “Non-editable documents are crucial to SOX compliance, and the immediate access can grant us rapid responses to vendors,” said Swartz. Not only does this save time and money, but faster responses on payments and invoicing helps to ensure that Accounting is as up to date as possible. This provides an accurate record for the Accounting team to review and report on. According to Bob Sparks, Senior Industry Consultant at AssetWorks, SDG&E set the bar high for similar utility organizations.

“ There is no one, in my opinion, that has a more exquisite Invoice Approval Process than SDG&E. They really have perfected this best-in-class process,” he said.

With roughly one thousand invoices a month between parts, fuel, commercial charges and more, having a best-in-class process ensures long-term and sustainable success.

For Swartz, their success stems from their use of one system for invoicing and fleet management. “We are much more efficient using one system, rather than communicating between two or three systems,” said Swartz. “One system reduces time and substantially increases integrity.” In addition, any defined roles or privileges will carry across each aspect of the system, guaranteeing no lapse in restricted content or actions that a user may stumble upon.

Moving Forward

With Fleet administrators monitoring the FleetFocus system internally and managing SOX compliance through their massive number of invoices, SDG&E is well positioned moving forward. It’s exciting what streamlined technology and efficient processes will enable them to accomplish next.

To learn more about the fleet management software mentioned in this case study, visit assetworks.com/fleet.