

Meeting Agenda

- UTC is looking forward to your attendance at the UTC Region 7 Meeting being held November 5 - 7 at the [Hyatt Centric French Quarter](#) located at 800 Iberville Street, New Orleans, LA 70112
- UTC will host a Welcome Reception on Tuesday, November 5 in the Atrium on the 2nd floor of the Hyatt.
- Beginning Wednesday, the registration desk, education sessions, exhibit area, and meals will be located on the lobby level of the Hyatt.
- Additional information may be found in the [Region 7 Community on UTC's NetWorks site at this link](#) and on the [event website at this link](#).
- The NetWorks community is only open to registered attendees of the meeting. [Click here to register now](#).

Tuesday, November 5th

5:00 PM – 7:00 PM Networking Reception in the Atrium on the 2nd floor of the Hyatt.

Wednesday, November 6th

All events will be held on the lobby level of the Hyatt in the Orleans and LaFitte Ballrooms.

7:00 AM Registration & Breakfast

8:00 – 8:30 AM Welcome Remarks & Introductions

Speaker: Keisha Sauls, Sr. Technical Analyst, CenterPoint Energy, Region 7 Chair

8:30 – 9:30 AM UTC President & CEO Address

Speaker: Rusty Williams, President & CEO, UTC

Join UTC President and CEO Rusty Williams as he discusses the latest things going on across the UTC association. The topics he plans to discuss include the development of the latest UTC Strategic Plan, the latest advocacy issues, the 2025 annual conference and many other topics. There will also be time for the members that are present to ask questions of Rusty and the other UTC staff at the meeting.

9:30 – 10:00 AM Networking Break

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10:00 – 11:00 AM **RF Network Design**

Speaker: **Travis Whitlock, Systems Engineer, Tait Americas**

This session will be a high-level discussion of RF system design. The course material will be based on Designing RF Combining Systems for Shared Radio Sites by Tait Communications Principal Engineer Ian Graham, published by Artech House in 2023.

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM Advocacy Update

Speaker: **Brett Kilbourne, Senior Vice President of Policy and General Counsel, Utilities Technology Council**

UTC continues to advocate at the FCC and Congress, as well as the states to promote the telecommunications and information technology interests of utilities. This session will provide an update on the latest developments in wireless, broadband, infrastructure and security policies. On the wireless front, there are emerging threats in terms of potential radiofrequency interference and there are new opportunities to access spectrum. Meanwhile, broadband funding presents opportunities for utilities and challenges from additional demands for access to utility pole, ducts, conduit and rights-of-way. Finally, additional security requirements are under consideration, including cyber incident reporting for critical infrastructure. Don't miss this important presentation from UTC, where you can ask your questions and provide your ideas on these emerging advocacy issues.

12:00 – 1:30 PM **Networking Lunch with Sponsors**

Please take this opportunity to visit our sponsors at their exhibits. This meeting would not be possible without their support.

1:30 – 2:30 PM **Region 7 Member Meeting. Core Members Only**

2:30 – 3:30 PM **State of the Union Utility Presentations**

Speakers: **Anand Vedapuri, Vice President, IT Infrastructure & Operations, CPS Energy**
Richie Cepeda, Director, Planning & Architecture, LCRA

The State of the Union Presentation is an opportunity to give an update on staff, projects, and plans taking place at each utility. The presentations are generally more specific to the telecom and IT areas, but interesting and major projects in other departments will often be discussed as well. The presentations are a good way to promote discussion between utilities about ongoing projects, lessons learned, etc.

3:30 – 4:00 PM **Afternoon Break**

4:00 – 5:00 PM **Options and Trade-Offs for modern Utility Field Area Network Telecommunications**

Speaker: **David L Hattey, Senior Associate Consultant, Lockard & White, Inc.**

Utilities need for Field Area Network data communications is growing dramatically thanks to Distributed Energy Resources (DER) like wind farms, solar farms, home/business installations of solar/battery/generation, and deregulation driving many small producers of energy to join the Grid. Serving those needs is a telecommunications challenge with many solutions to be investigated, designed at high levels, and priced at high levels for comparison. This presentation explores some of the possible solutions including layering multiple Spectrum (narrowband, wideband, broadband) and multiple Protocols (Traditional NarrowBand FAN, WideBand FAN, Mesh, NBloT, pLTE) to meet these needs and the inherent trade-offs. There is no “one-size-fits-all” solution for Utilities!

5:00 – 7:00 PM **Networking Reception with Sponsors**

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Thursday, November 7th

7:00 AM **Registration & Breakfast**

8:00 – 9:00 AM **Fiber Splicing for All, In All Seasons!**

Speakers: **Eddie Shamp IV, Manager of Broadband & Utility, Graybar, Inc.**
Dalin Kennard, Senior Account Manager, Graybar, Inc.
Tim Moore, Director of Service Provider Markets, UCL Swift

The session will address the skilled labor workforce shortage and implement equipment solutions to fill the labor gap. Evaluate new network construction versus maintaining existing networks. Compare various fiber architectures to meet both current and future requirements.

9:00 – 10:00 AM **Optimizing Field Area Network Sites with Scalability for Next Generation Technology**

Speakers: **John Cherry, PE, Project Manager, Burns & McDonnell**
Tyson Hokes, RF Engineer, Burns & McDonnell

As utilities migrate their field area networks to modern technologies, they are challenged with retrofitting existing communication sites to accommodate as site preparation work is often overlooked. When adopted, advances in site survey technology and scalable design practices pay dividends to a utility in future technology deployments, realized in both cost savings and

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expedited deployment schedules. Likewise, revisiting existing site maintenance procedures and general best practices will increase system reliability while reducing O&M costs.

10:00 – 10:30 AM Networking Break

10:30 – 11:30 AM Exploring Hydrogen/Fuel Cell Technology Applications for Gas and Electric Distribution Systems

Speakers: **Richie Cepeda, Director, Planning & Architecture, LCRA**
Kevin Fellhoelter, PE, Owner/Founder, Solara Technical
Darin Painter, Vice President of Sales, VP Sales - Plug Power

As backup power becomes more important to support critical communications systems, Hydrogen Fuel Cell technology has emerged as an alternative to diesel or natural gas generators. This discussion will focus on the benefits and mechanics of hydrogen fuel cells. A panel of a manufacturer, integrator, and customers will field questions and discussion on this topic.

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM Path automation in OT Networks

Speaker: **Dmitri Litvine, Principal Consulting Engineer, Nokia**

IP/MPLS becomes widely adopted technology for networking migration from legacy SONET infrastructure. It serves well for all for variety of transmission and distribution automation use cases including transport for Teleprotection Relay circuits, where path diversity and stringent latency requirements mandates very often explicit per-hop provisioning of MLS LSPs. This manual provisioning is very familiar to many OT operators, who often find it cumbersome, labour intensive and increasingly error prone with network scale.

Path Computation Element (PCE) along with Path Profile Attribute framework powered by Nokia Bell Labs STAR algorithm, enables automated disjoint and bidirectional LSP's path computation and setup, which eliminates the need of manual explicit path configuration. In addition, disjoint paths provisioned by PCE can also be enabled with AMP (active multipath) to provide seamless switchover for Teleprotection circuits with zero packet loss. Combined, AMP and PCE/Path profiles bring Teleprotection networking to new operational level.

12:30 PM – 12:45 PM Wrap-Up and Adjournment