The city gas distribution (CGD) industry has started to recognise the need for automation and use of advanced technologies to bring down costs and increase efficiency. To this end, Indraprastha Gas Limited (IGL) has provided its customers and stakeholders with the latest information technology-related services to enhance the user experience.

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In the piped natural gas (PNG) segment, IGL has installed automated meter reading (AMR) systems for its 8,250 domestic customers and at all field regulating stations. It has implemented prepaid metering for 300 domestic users and smartphone-based meter readings for all its domestic customers. The company has carried out pilot trial of the optical character recognition-based AMR system for domestic consumers.

With regard to pipelines, around 39 sectionalising valves (SVs) have been automated, and are being monitored from the integrated control centre at Kaka Nagar. All the SVs are integrated into the supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system, which offers features such as monitoring and controlling of the on/off status of SVs; monitoring of live values of pressure and remote shut-off of SVs; monitoring of process parameters of SV stations; and alarm and trend analysis.

In the compressed natural gas (CNG) segment, a monthly gas balancing sheet is generated through SAP. An online daily progress report has been developed for CNG stations, besides daily gas reconciliation software. Digital payment facilities for CNG customers (debit/credit card, Paytm, etc.) have also been implemented. IGL also provides prepaid card facilities for CNG retail and fleet customers. Flow meters have been installed to measure engine consumption in all engine-driven compressor packages. CCTV cameras have been installed at all the CNG stations and can be monitored from the central control room. Automation of dispensers has made it possible to implement daily incentive schemes for CNG customers. Transaction details, pressure at the dispenser end, and station-wise reports of sale of gas are being monitored. Online receipt printers have been installed at CNG stations. Lastly, it has also implemented the remote rate change facility.

IGL connect

The CGD company has also launched IGL Connect, a user-friendly mobile app for PNG customers and CNG users. The app enables them to access their accounts any time, anywhere. PNG customers can view the billing and payment history, lodge complaints, view their complaint status, share feedback, update mobile and phone numbers, submit meter readings and make online payment. There is also an “Instapayment” option available on the IGL website for online payment. PNG customers can now apply for new connections and upload their documents for the same online. CNG customers can view the nearby CNG stations on the map. They can also search for CNG stations in a particular area.

IGL smart card

In October 2017, IGL launched prepaid CNG cards for both retail and fleet operators for payment at CNG stations. Known as IGL Smart Cards, they are near-field communication-enabled, which allows customers to refuel CNG without carrying cash. There are two types of cards – fleet cards and retail cards. Anyone who owns commercial vehicles such as trucks, buses, goods vehicles, taxis, jeeps, vans, etc. can enrol for the fleet card programme. The fleet cards will be loaded through the central pool account of the fleet owner. An operator can access live dashboards, reports and transactions. Retail cards, on the other hand, are for individual owners of cars, autos, taxis, goods vehicles, etc. They too can access the live dashboard, reports and transactions with the separate login IDs created for them.

All the transactions can be monitored any time through the management information system (MIS). The card can be recharged through net banking, online with debit/credit cards and at CNG stations. Information regarding the card balance can also be accessed online. Further, pin-based security is employed with a separate pin for each of the user cards and a control pin to control card transactions. Fleet owners can perform multiple actions on the cards (hotlist, de-hotlist, block, change pin and recharge account [manual+auto]).

Till date, 23,631 retail cards have been issued to private vehicle owners from various IGL outlets. Around 95 per cent credit parties have shifted to the IGL Smart Card Fleet Program. Further, 260 new fleet customers have enrolled for the same. A total of 2,919 fleet cards have been issued to 482 fleet owners under the IGL Smart Card Fleet Program, which is catering to

more than 10,000 vehicles (buses, RTVs and minitrucks) in Delhi-NCR, Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad.

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