

## PICTURES WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

**I**mages have proved valuable in more ways than one at Laclede Electric Cooperative in Lebanon, Mo. The distribution co-op's lineworkers have been linking laptops with office computers through the LookOut map viewing program from Powel, Inc. The end result: graphic displays of maps and data from geographic information system (GIS), customer information system (CIS), and automated meter reading (AMR) reports.

For example, CIS and AMR information can be represented spatially in the GIS, then displayed graphically using LookOut. From service vehicles, co-op employees can click on a map dot representing a meter and see its number and corresponding phase. If field crews want

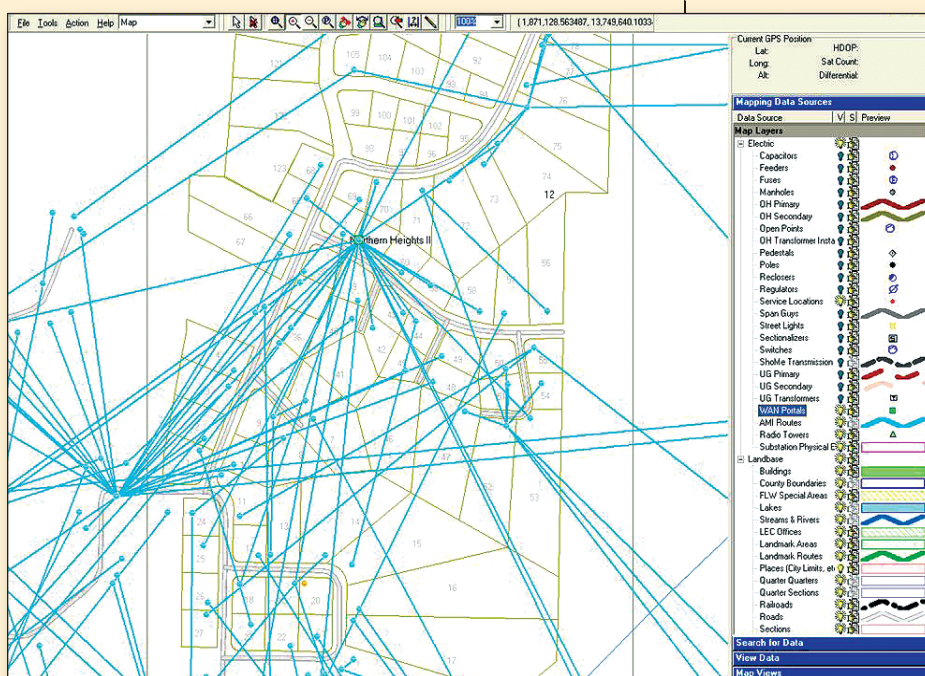
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to know pertinent data about a particular line, they click on the facility in LookOut and quickly discover the phase, type of wire, and other useful details.

"We don't like to maintain any more symbology or file formats than we have to," relates Toni Tucker, Laclede Electric GIS programmer. "Since we're already exporting shape files from our GIS to Powel's StakeOut application, those files and symbols can also be used in LookOut. The product is very similar in look and feel."

LookOut, Tucker suggests, offers additional advantages in building out the co-op's advanced metering infrastructure (AMI). "Our engineering techs find the software allows them to see the entire radio frequency path—from meter to meter or meter to the wide area network portal and, eventually, back to the radio tower. This helps them get an up-to-date status of meters constituting our two-way AMI wireless network to determine where better connectivity may be needed."

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