

UtiliSite Council Benchmarking Survey Report

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Executive Summary

- **Applications:** Sixty-five percent of respondents said that an application was required. When asked which tasks were covered by the application fee, responses included initial reviews, structural analysis, preliminary analysis, and feasibility studies.
- **Tower Database:** Seventy-nine percent of respondents indicated that they maintain a tower database. Of those respondents that maintain a tower database, only 11% said that the database was available online.
- **Site Assessment:** Over 71% of respondents indicated that they conduct a site visit and evaluate the site for a collocation after receiving an application.
- **Structural Evaluation:** Seventy-eight percent of respondents said they conduct a structural analysis for each collocation. Fifty-four percent of respondents said that the utility is responsible for the structural analysis, while 35% said that the carrier is responsible.
- **Site Acquisition/Land Rights/Easement for Structures (Utility-Owned Property):** Over 64% of respondents utilize leases for approval to use the land obtained, while 52% use easements, and 34% use purchases.
- **Site Acquisition/Land Rights/Easement for Structures (Non Utility-Owned Property):** Seventy-one percent of respondents said that an easement from the property owner is required if the property is not owned by the utility.
- **A&E: Site Plans, Permitting:** Nearly 47% of respondents indicated that the carrier or agent is responsible for the development of the site plans. Over 41% said that the utility is responsible.
- **Construction and Installation:** Forty-seven percent of respondents said that the utility provides the project management for construction. Nearly 42% indicated that the carrier or agent was responsible for project management for construction.
- **Operations and Maintenance:** Nearly 47% of respondents indicated that the utility or utility contractor performs maintenance on the towers, while 42% indicated that the carrier or carrier contractor performs tower maintenance. Approximately 45% of respondents indicated that the utility or utility contractor performs ground maintenance, while 40% indicated that the carrier or carrier contractor performs ground maintenance.
- **Collocation Agreements:** Nearly 72% of respondents use a master agreement with each carrier, compared with 16% that do not.
- **Compensation:** Over 67% said that their billing was based on market rate, followed by location at 40%.
- **Civil Work:** Sixty percent of respondents said that the carrier or agent contracts the civil crew for the ground work, compared with 25% for utilities.
- **Project Close-out:** Approximately 35% of respondents said they provide a blank copy of the punch list prior to construction, while 46% said they did not. Over 74% of respondents indicated that a walk-through is conducted as part of the close-out.

- **Make Ready – Tower and Ground:** Twenty-one percent of respondents said that the construction process triggers the billing of work done by the tower owner but billed to the carrier.
- **Additional Questions:** Over 69% of respondents allow monopoles to be built on their property. Nearly half of the respondents said that the utility owns monopoles, while 24% said that the carrier owns monopoles. Nearly 64% of respondents build separate enclosed areas specifically for the carrier to use on their property. Over 44% of respondents allow wireless attachments on distribution poles.

Background

The UtiliSite Council, a subsidiary of the Utilities Telecom Council, is made up of members of nine utilities: Duke Energy Corporation, FirstEnergy Corporation, Gainesville Regional Utilities, JEA, Memphis Light, Gas, & Water Division, Portland General Electric Company, Southern Telecom Inc., SRP Telecom, and Tennessee Valley Authority. The Council was formed in 2007 to help utilities develop best practices and procedures to speed market responsiveness in the carrier support marketplace.

Early in 2008, the Council decided to conduct the UtiliSite Benchmarking Survey in an effort to determine the similarities and differences in the way that members conducted their telecom business. The survey instrument was drafted and revised by board members and ultimately launched in April of 2008 using Survey Monkey, a web-based survey software package. The survey instrument contained 95 questions and was divided into sections that relate to the telecom process. For example, there were four questions asked regarding the Applications Process and four questions regarding the Site Assessment. Appendix A contains the entire questionnaire.

The initial email containing a link to the survey was sent to 2,248 telecom and information technology professionals representing 422 energy and water companies across the United States. Nearly 700 or 30% of the email addresses were invalid email addresses. In addition to the initial email, a link to the UtiliSite Benchmarking Survey was provided in the April 2008 UTC Alert, the Monthly news bulletin for and about the members of the Utilities Telecom Council. Appendix B contains the initial email and the paragraph and link in the UTC Alert.

There were 109 valid survey responses, 98 of which received the initial email invitation. Eleven respondents from the following companies did not receive the email invitation and may have responded to the survey because of the UTC Alert.