

THE

UTILITYSOURCE

January 2024

Products and Services for Today's Electric, Telecom, and CATV Utilities

The Digital Substation

Prinoth Expands Westward

**12 Questions to Ask Before
Powering Up the Snow Thrower:
Keep Safety Top of Mind**

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*— Mathew Hughes, Uncle Shuck's Corn Maze
Dawsonville, Georgia*

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The Digital Substation



Thinking “Outside the Box” Could Play a Crucial Role in the Future of Substation Automation.

The future of power system substations may be redefined by the application of virtualization. At least that is what an increasing number of utilities are envisioning as they explore the opportunity for increased virtualization in substation design. In this future, there would be a significant reduction in the hardware used in substations. Instead, tasks will be carried out on cloud servers, marking a noticeable shift from the current reliance on extensive racks of hardware.

The appeal for utilities is the significant cost reduction for substation design and engineering, reduced usage of copper wiring, and the ability to easily replicate substation designs for future expansions.

“Consider that today’s substation can have 200 or more independent [hardware] boxes each performing a dedicated task,” says Jeremy Anderson, Senior Vice President of Product Development at NovaTech Automation, a leading U.S. provider of automation and engineering solutions for power utilities headquartered in Quakertown, PA. “That’s a tremendous amount of wire to pull, hardware to maintain, and it continues to become more and more congested. In a virtual digital substation, two or three servers run everything.”

With a vision for an intelligent grid of the future that is adaptive and resilient requiring less hardware and leveraging more virtualization, the utilities industry has formed the Virtual Protection and Control Alliance (vPAC) to explore how to do this. The focus is to accelerate the creation of a standards-based, open, interoperable and secure architecture to host protection, automation, and control solutions for power system substations. NovaTech is one of its over 20 member organizations.

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“From our standpoint, we wanted to help define the future of substation automation,” says Anderson. With this in mind, NovaTech has spent the past year creating a virtual version of its Orion Substation Automation Platform to run on any server. The system is hosted on a host machine known as a hypervisor and servers powered by Intel CPUs.

The company’s flagship product, the Orion is a communication and automation processor that can connect to nearly any substation device in its native protocol, perform advanced math and logic, and securely present the source or calculated data to any number of clients in their own protocol.

The Orion can be integrated with any equipment, including competitors, and is often connected to microprocessor-based relays, meters, event recorders, IEDs and RTUs. It is then connected to an existing enterprise network or SCADA system.

An emerging substation model

According to Anderson, there is a coordinated push by some large investor owned utilities in the United States and globally to move to what is being called the “digital substation.” Still, not all utilities are ready to pull the plug on the traditional substation design quite yet.

“Most utilities aren’t moving in this direction at this point,” explains Anderson. “But they are certainly investigating it thoroughly with the plan to move in this direction in the coming years.”

Cost savings is a leading driver of utilities’ interest in virtualization.

“It is a lot less expensive to build multiple substations once a virtual design is established because you’re not pulling tons of copper wire everywhere,” says Anderson. “When it is based on the ethernet, you can build a substation that is somewhat cookie-cutter in design and easily replicatable. This represents a significant cost saving in substation design and engineering.

The cost outlay for hardware is also reduced. “Consider that two or three servers that cost \$10,000 each can potentially replace up to 200 hardware devices that average \$10,000 per device. The savings are significant even if you factor in licensing fees for virtual machines,” says Anderson.

Recent supply chain challenges are also increasing the appeal of hardware agnostic solutions.

“The pandemic certainly tested the supply chains in our sector,” says Anderson. “There were massive issues around the world trying to buy hardware, especially custom-built devices. With virtualization, if a server ever fails, it is easier to find a replacement and the utility is not limited to proprietary hardware.”

Designing the virtual system

In creating the virtual Orion, NovaTech wanted to ensure the system functioned identically to its current hardware-based system.

“The biggest challenge was taking a system that was developed over many years as embedded software for purpose-built hardware and make it run on any server,” says Anderson.

He adds that in some ways it was easier than initially thought. “The virtual Orion looks and operates the same as every unit we have sold,” says Anderson. “It just happens to run on hardware that we didn’t build.”

Anderson adds that NovaTech was intent on ensuring the customer experience was unaltered.

“Our customers know the Orion, how to program it, and how to interact with it. So one of our major goals was to ensure that whatever we do in this virtual environment, the Orion would operate identically from the customer’s perspective.”

The virtual Orion system is currently in beta test at a utility in Arizona with the full release planned in February. The company plans to debut it at the

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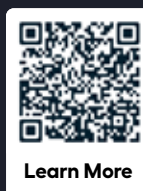


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Looking ahead

“We are still in the early days of the deployment of the virtual digital substations,” says Anderson. “There are some early adopters, but I anticipate that we are at least five years away from broad-based market adoption.”

However there is an opportunity to solve a more immediate issue in substation environments. As more IoT devices are installed in utility distribution systems, a single virtual Orion on a server could be used to collect and manage data from thousands of sources. When all these devices must be hard-wired, it can take several racks of Orions to collect all the data.

A similar scenario could drive the use of the Orion beyond the substation environment and into any enterprise where thousands of devices are collecting data.

With cloud computing and virtualization changing the contours of many industries, momentum continues to build behind virtualizing more of the work of a substation. The blueprint for tomorrow’s power system substation has yet to be fully written, but it is only a matter of time that we will see more virtual environments emerge through the collective expertise of industry stakeholders.

For more information on the vPAC Alliance, visit www.vpacalliance.com. More information on Orion substation automation solutions can be found at the NovaTech Automation website, www.novatechautomation.com/solutions/substation-automation, or by contacting (484) 812-6000.

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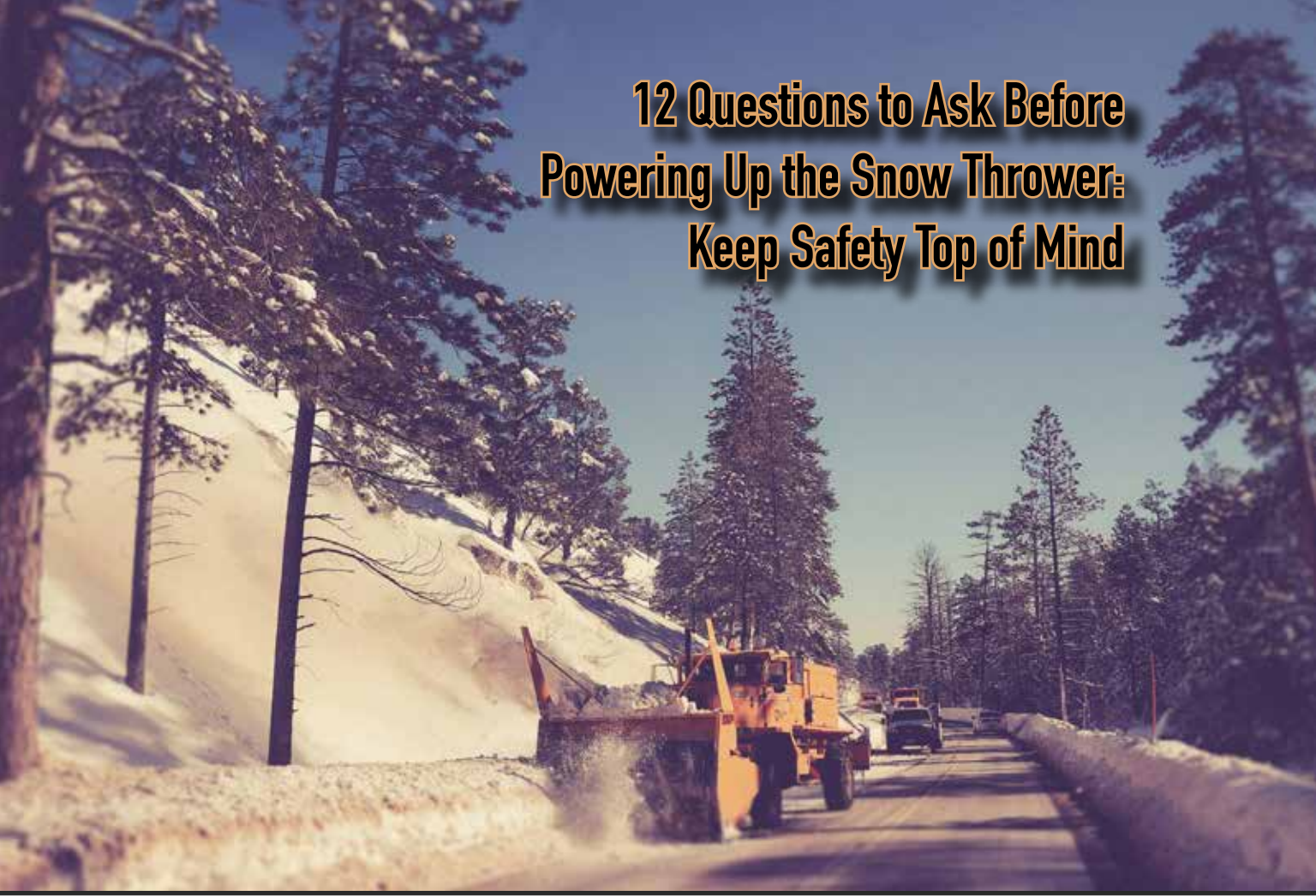
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12 Questions to Ask Before Powering Up the Snow Thrower: Keep Safety Top of Mind



Snow flurries and winter storms can be unpredictable and the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) encourages home and business owners to prepare in advance before bad weather hits.

“Outdoor power equipment like snow throwers can make quick work of a big job,” says OPEI President and CEO Kris Kiser. “Just remember, when getting out your snow thrower, review your owner’s manual. You should know how to correctly operate controls and quickly shut it off if necessary.”

OPEI offers 12 Questions to ask before operating a snow thrower.

Have you read your owner’s manual?

Know safe handling procedures and how to operate the controls of your machine. If the manual cannot be found, look it up online and store a copy on the computer.

Have you checked your equipment?

Equipment should be powered off when checking it. Adjust any cables and check the auger. If you forgot to drain the fuel before storing your equipment last year, empty the gas tank.

Have you purchased the right fuel?

Be sure to use the fuel recommended by the equipment manufacturer. Fuel that is more than 30 days old can phase separate and cause operating problems. Buy gasoline ahead of a storm. For more information see LookBeforeYouPump.com.

Is gasoline used safely?

Never add fuel to a running or hot engine. Store gasoline in a fuel container and label with date purchased and ethanol content. Make sure fuel is stored safely and out of reach of children.

Are batteries charged (for battery-powered equipment)?

Make sure batteries are fully charged before a storm, in case electricity goes out. Recharge only with the charger specified by the manufacturer. A charger that is suitable for one type of battery pack may not be compatible with another battery pack. Follow all charging instructions and do not charge the battery pack or equipment outside the temperature range specified in the instructions. Charging improperly or at temperatures outside the specified range may damage the battery. •

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Is the space clear of obstructions?

Snow can hide objects. Doormats, hoses, balls, toys, wires, and other debris should be removed. When run over by a snow thrower, these objects may harm the machine or people.

OPERATING SNOW THROWERS SAFELY

Are you dressed properly?

Wear safety glasses, gloves and footwear that can handle cold and slippery surfaces.

Is your clean out tool ready?

NEVER put your hands inside the auger or chute. Use a clean out tool to unclog snow or debris. Always turn off the snow thrower and wait for all moving parts to come to a complete stop before clearing any clogs.

Is your snow thrower operated only in visible conditions?

Never operate the snow thrower without good visibility or light.

Will you use extreme caution clearing slopes and hills?

Never attempt to clear steep slopes. Use caution when changing directions on slopes or inclines.

For electric equipment, do you pay attention to where the cord is?

Use an extension cord designed for outdoor use. Be aware of where the power cord is at all times when using the machine. Avoid tripping. Do not run over the power cord.

Are pets and children inside while the snow thrower is operating?

It's best to keep kids and pets indoors and supervised while a snow thrower is operating. Do not allow them to play in the snow as it is tossed out of the chute.

About OPEI

OPEI is an international trade association representing manufacturers and suppliers of outdoor power equipment, small engines, battery power systems, portable generators, utility and personal transport vehicles, and golf cars. OPEI is the advocacy voice of the industry, and a recognized Standards Development Organization for the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and active internationally through the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) in the development of safety and performance standards. OPEI owns Equip Exposition, the international landscape, outdoor living, and equipment exposition, and administers the TurfMutt Foundation, which directs the environmental education program, TurfMutt. OPEI-Canada represents members on a host of issues, including recycling, emissions and other regulatory developments across the Canadian provinces. •

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Prinoth Expands Westward

Prinoth Crawler Carriers is thrilled to announce new dealer partnerships in the western part of the USA. In early 2023 both Coastline Equipment (So Cal. & NV and NV) and Western States CAT (ID, MT, WY, OR, WA), became part of the Prinoth family. In the fall of 2023, Papé Machinery (No Cal., OR, WA and HI) also joined the Prinoth Crawler Carrier group.

Coastline Equipment

In Southern California and Nevada, Coastline Equipment offers comprehensive services as a dealer and will handle the sales, leasing, and servicing of Panther vehicles. Prinoth was initially drawn to establish a business relationship with Coastline Equipment due to their exceptional reputation in the construction industry in their areas of business.

Western States

Western States Equipment Company has a long legacy for providing quality equipment and excellent service to customers. Twenty-three years after its original inception in the early 1900's, Western States applied for and was awarded the Caterpillar dealership service area for southern Idaho. Western States Equipment has a proud history of acquisition and growth. What began as four service branches has grown into a much larger, award-winning organization with 17 general line and truck engine branches, and 15 Cat® Rental Stores. They will be responsible for Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, regions of Oregon and Washington.

Papé Machinery

Papé Machinery offers Construction and Forestry equipment for John Deere and currently operates just under 30 branches located in different Western US states. They provide equipment in many industries including general construction, power electric, oil and gas, firefighting and rescue, forestry and they have a substantial rental fleet for all types of equipment.

"We are extremely excited to welcome these three industry stalwart to our dealer group. With their respective footprints and driven sales organizations, we feel confident that these new relationships will enhance our western foothold and brand presence tremendously. All three of these companies are well-established distributors and have extensive knowledge of their dedicated markets. That should reflect in our crawler carriers sales and rental opportunities," commented Jody Beasley, VP of Sales for Prinoth.

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Big Changes, Improvements Slated for 2024 Equip Exposition

Award-winning and fifth largest trade show in the country reveals plans—early.

Equip Exposition, the award-winning trade show for the international landscape, outdoor living and outdoor power equipment industry, will once again take over the city of Louisville, October 15-18, 2024. “Only this year, we’re making some fundamental shifts and improvements that will elevate the show to the next level,” says Kris Kiser, President and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), which owns and manages the show.

From new exhibitor space to new entertainment options and more opportunities to connect and network, 2024 attendees can expect:

- A Tuesday evening Welcome Reception at Churchill Downs, which is marking the 150th anniversary of the Kentucky Derby this year, where attendees can see the recent upgrades to the racetrack. Sponsored by Caterpillar.
- Kevin O’Connor from This Old House as keynote speaker Wednesday morning. Sponsored by Kress.
- A special happy hour in Freedom Hall at the Kentucky Exposition Center (KEC) starting just after the show closes on Wednesday. House band, the Crashers, will perform at the event.
- A Thursday evening arena concert at the KFC Yum! Center in downtown Louisville featuring multi-platinum entertainer and musician, Trace Adkins, sponsored by SENIX.
- Expanded Spanish-language education focused on helping crew leaders become better managers.
- The return of the very successful and well-attended Women’s Reception on Thursday evening, sponsored by SiteOne and Belgard.
- More opportunities to connect in-person with social media influencers at events like the Morning Show at Expo, sponsored by Kohler, and ENERGIZE.
- Improved logistics, including a shuttle bus drop-off at the West Wing which will improve parking lot congestion.

“We’ve listened to our attendees, and are adding new experiences to give them more of what they want: Being with their peers, talking about business struggles and getting real answers,” says Kiser. “There’s no other place where landscapers, equipment manufacturers and dealers can come together to talk to each other, peer to peer, in such a supportive environment. Whether you need help with people, products or processes, the answers to your questions are at Expo.”

Equip Expo provides a dynamic experience with over a million square feet of exhibits and a sprawling 30-acre Outdoor Demo Yard. Expo is the only show in the outdoor living industry where attendees can dig, cut, mow, mulch and test equipment before buying it. The show is also a hub for professional growth, offering essential certifications and educational resources to help industry professionals transform and expand their businesses.

The 2023 show brought together more than 27,000 participants from all 50 states and 46 countries. Landscape contractor registrations increased by 20 percent over the previous year, and dealers were up five percent, marking an increasing interest in hands-on experiences that Equip Expo has championed for more than 40 years.

“We’re always in expansion mode. Due to space demand last year, we opened up the West Wing to exhibitors to great success,” says Kiser. “And we’re going to improve the exhibitor experience there in 2024 by making the West Wing a much larger hub of activity, in-



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cluding putting our pet adoption event Mutt Madness, and the main food offerings there, as well as the Drone Zone, a golf simulation and an attendee lounge.”

The state of Kentucky, which owns the KEC, is planning a massive renovation to the facility in the coming years, which will expand its footprint and reorient the building. “We’re looking forward to that project, as we continue to sell out our trade show floor,” Kiser said, adding that West Wing exhibitors will be “first in line for space when the new wing of the KEC is built on that side of the building. We believe it’s important to reward existing exhibitors; they will take priority when the KEC expands.”

He adds, “Demand for exhibit space doesn’t slow down. We already have more than 80 companies on the waiting list. Anyone interested in exhibit space or sponsorships should jump on it immediately.”

The blockbuster show takes place every October in the Derby City and brings more than \$21 million to Louisville. Due to its size, the show with co-location partner Hardscape North America fully occupies the North, East and South halls and continues expansion into the West Wing of the KEC.

“Louisville is a fantastic place for us; it’s the home for our global industry event. We’re committed to the city, and it’s committed to us,” says Kiser. “But since we take over Louisville for four days, I’m giving one word of advice: book your hotel and airline tickets early if you want to attend this year’s show. Those two things will grow scarcer with every passing month. And you won’t want to miss Expo—not this year.” Housing opportunities through the show’s official housing provider will open in February.

Registration for the 2024 show is now open. Tickets to the 2024 Equip Exposition are currently at \$25 per person, but prices will increase April 1. Register here today.

In 2023, the show received two Grand Awards in Trade Show Executive’s Gold 100 Awards program: “Most Innovative Show” and the “Slam Dunk Award: Best New Idea.”

For more information visit equipexposition.com, contact the Equip Exposition office at info@equipexposition.com or call 502-536-7050.

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