

Powering the New Digital Utility

Cisco smart grid and network solutions help enable security, resilience, and operational efficiency

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Power on

- Utilities are facing unprecedented challenges to maintaining supply and customer uptime
- To thrive in the new era, utilities need to connect and modernize grid operations end to end
- Leading utilities are turning to Cisco for a full range of solutions, including grid security, WAN modernization, substation and distribution automation, smart meters, mobile workforce collaboration, and more

Utilities are grappling with the need for a flexible and evolving grid as they face many challenges, including:

- Integrating renewable energy resources
- Aging grids
- Rising security threats
- Tightening regulations
- More demanding customers

Cisco's solutions for digital utilities help leading power companies adapt to the changing landscape and fuel continued growth and innovation.



Challenges

- Rising security threats—both cyber and physical
- Tougher industry regulations
- Rising costs, shrinking margins
- Increased complexity due to the demand for renewables



Solution

- Enable grid automation using proven IP networking technologies
- Deploy proven end-to-end security systems
- Empower the workforce with a unified collaboration platform



Why Cisco

- Unrivaled security expertise
- Single vendor with end-to-end networking solution
- Automation and management tools to reduce complexity
- Leadership in IoT
- Commitment to interoperability and open standards
- Strong customer and partner ecosystem



The evolving utilities landscape

After what seemed like decades of stability and predictability, utilities have entered a new era of change and uncertainty. Security threats are growing, regulations are tightening, and new technologies—from smart meters to microgrids—are disrupting longstanding business models. Meanwhile, consumers are demanding more from their power company, including flexible pricing and sustainable energy options. These trends have changed the game for utilities, forcing them to evolve or face diminishing growth and profitability.

Recent security incidents—both cyber and physical—have sent shock waves through the industry, spurring new regulations to avert crippling attacks on critical energy infrastructure. Yet most utilities have a long way to go to protect their grids. Isolating the network is no longer an option. The reality is that utilities need to be connected to increase grid efficiencies, improve resilience, and—ultimately—deliver the next generation of services to an increasingly digitized and mobile customer base.

The growing adoption of solar, wind, and other Distributed Renewable Energy Resources has also challenged utilities to adapt by integrating these distributed energy resources into the grid.¹ This is not a simple integration, given the challenges of implementing bidirectional flows. Meanwhile, consumers themselves are driving change by demanding more choice and flexibility from their energy providers.

To thrive in the new era, utilities will need to invest in more efficient, automated, and resilient energy grids. The industry's infamous aging infrastructure—and graying workforce—complicates the task. Strategy-minded utilities are increasingly planning for a future based on IT and smart grid applications that require advanced telecommunications systems. IP-based, packet-switched networks will form the backbone of these new systems, providing system interoperability and enabling a spectrum of new applications that improve grid security, control, and automation.

For instance, by harnessing connected-grid technologies, utilities can continuously monitor traffic anomalies and neutralize cyberthreats before they occur. Secure wireless connectivity can help workers troubleshoot outages faster. Distribution automation enabled by IP networks – through greater visibility of grid assets, can curb power losses. And new multiservice networks can rein in costs by consolidating a mix of legacy services and protocols on a single highly efficient communications network. These are just a few examples of what's possible for the new digital utility.

¹ Renewables are set to account for almost 95% of the increase in global power capacity through 2026, with solar PV alone providing more than half. Source: International Energy Agency.



Perhaps most promising (and exciting): Connected-grid technologies will offer utilities a broad platform for innovation, helping unlock the power in the latest iterations of the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence, and predictive analytics. Considering that utilities are estimated to have the largest collection of intelligent devices in operation, the potential for capitalizing on this built-in IoT network—and the terabytes of data it holds—is enormous.

The logic of the new era is clear: If utilities are going to reverse flat or declining revenues, cope with an aging infrastructure, improve workforce efficiency, and address new customer expectations, they must place digital transformation at the top of their business agenda. efficiency, and address new customer expectations, they must place digital transformation at the top of their business agenda.

Modernizing the grid with Cisco

The challenges for utilities are huge, but so are the opportunities. More and more utilities are partnering with Cisco and harnessing new technologies to enable a range of modern capabilities that accelerate business transformation.

Cisco smart grid solutions address every aspect of the modern utility's network operations, from the control centers and Wide Area Networks (WANs) that provide oversight and management of the entire grid to the increasingly complex and automated substations that form the backbone of energy distribution and the field area networks that link the “last mile” of the network to residential and business consumers.



Control centers/Wide area network



Transmission and Distribution Substations



Field area network (distribution automation, remote asset management, smart metering, and remote workforce automation)



Distributed Renewable Energy Resources (Wind, Solar, Battery Storage)

What utilities care about today

- Physical security and cybersecurity
- Grid modernization
- Integrating new distributed energy resources (solar, microgrids, etc.)
- Complying with new regulations
- Accommodating rising consumer empowerment
- Integrating new energy sources and consumption models, e.g. EV charging.
- Improving safety, security, and reliability
- Retaining and acquiring customers
- Exploring unregulated market opportunities
- Mergers and acquisitions

6 critical capabilities

Our research shows that modern utilities need to focus on mastering six critical capabilities—spanning the range of network places—to drive market leadership and profitable growth in the decade ahead:

1. Grid security

Cisco offers utilities the broadest portfolio of security solutions, countering both cyber and physical threats and protecting every part of the network, from the control center to substations to field area networks and mobile workers. Cisco Grid Security solutions deliver an integrated, converged approach to security that:

- Provides critical infrastructure gradesecurity to grid systems,data, and assets
- Monitors the network while mitigating threats
- Helps utilities meet regulatory requirements

Cisco's solutions for cybersecurity give network operators visibility into every device and allow continuous monitoring of the network for anomalous traffic and malware. The solutions provide secure remote access to the network—boosting efficiency and worker productivity—and help ensure that the latest patches and updates are installed, further strengthening the network against cybercrime and data loss.

Physical security is no less critical—a fact starkly highlighted by the well-documented incident at PG&E's Metcalf substation in San Jose, California, where gunmen knocked out 17 transformers that help power Silicon Valley; a blackout was narrowly averted. Cisco leads the market in providing physical video surveillance, access control, alarms, and tamper-prevention solutions to safeguard power plants, transmission lines, substations, smart meters, and more.

Cisco solutions for grid security

Cybersecurity products

- Cisco Identity Services Engine
- Cisco Cyber Vision
- Cisco DNA Center
- Cisco Next Generation Firewall
- Cisco SD-WAN

Cisco solutions for utility WANs

Teleprotection

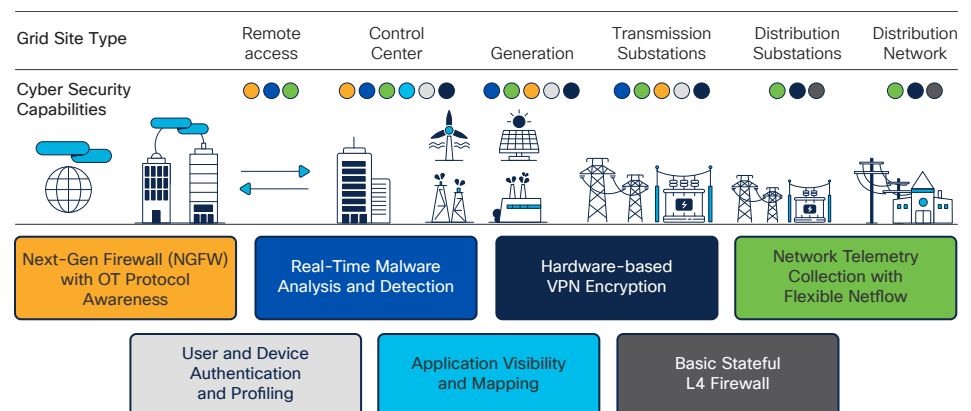
Cisco's deterministic, multiservice WAN provides industry-leading performance, low latency, reliability, and flexible transport options.

Products: Cisco Aggregation Service Routers (ASR), Cisco Network Convergence System (NCS), and Cisco Evolved Network Programmable Network Manager (EPNM)

Synchrophasors/phasor measurement units (PMUs)

Cisco offers carrier-class precise timing for the WAN and power-profile support for the LAN. **Products:** Cisco ASR and NCS Platforms, Cisco Catalyst industrial routers, Cisco Catalyst Industrial Ethernet switches.

Figure 1. Grid cybersecurity



Supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA)

Cisco's broad portfolio features flexible transport options, and supports features for serial based transport (Raw Sockets) and Serial based Scada protocol translation (IEC60870-5-101 to 104 and Serial DNP3 to DNP3).

Products: Cisco Catalyst Industrial Routers and Cisco Catalyst Industrial Ethernet Switches. Cisco Field Network Director for automation and management.

We see many utilities looking to build their own backhaul networks using Private LTE and in other regions, we see utilities looking to leverage technologies such as 450MHz, allowing them to have a resilient battery backup network. We support both.

Raw socket and pseudowire transport

Cisco IoT Field Network Director.

Cisco solutions for substation automation

Cisco offers an unmatched portfolio of solutions purpose-built for utility substations with deterministic LAN, low latency, reliability, and total security.

Products: Cisco Catalyst Industrial Routers, Cisco Catalyst Industrial Ethernet Switches, Cisco DNA Center for management, Cisco SD-WAN.

Cisco solutions for distribution automation

Cisco stands out with the breadth of its DA portfolio, including integrated cellular and WiSUN RF Mesh; small-form-factor, low-power gateways; private LTE and 5G, Wi-Fi or Cisco Ultra Reliable Wireless Backhaul (CURWB) for backhaul; and comprehensive security and multiservice capabilities.

Products: Cisco Catalyst industrial routers (IR), Cisco IOx, Cisco Catalyst edge platforms (IE), Cisco IoT Field Network Director (FND).

2. Utility WAN

Cisco is defining the future of utility WANs with solutions that help companies unite disparate networks and manage assets more efficiently and securely across the grid. Cisco's portfolio of P, MPLS and SDWAN networking solutions simplifies and streamlines utility WAN operations. The solutions empower utilities to move toward a modern, full-mesh matrix linking the distribution grid, substations, control center, data center, and corporate offices.

With Cisco's industry-leading WAN solutions, utilities can:

- Converge multiple proprietary systems onto a single IP network and extend IT infrastructure from corporate offices to substations
- Increase system availability, safety, and performance for large-scale networks
- Move from reactive to active network management
- More easily comply with regulations such as NERC CIP and the EU NIS Directive

3. Substation automation

Traditional substation designs—often dependent on a jumble of leased lines and siloed applications—lack the functionality and scalability needed to meet today's operating standards and security requirements. Cisco helps utility operators modernize the grid with next-generation substation automation products and services, including the Cisco Catalyst IR8300 Rugged Series Router and Cisco Catalyst IE9300 Rugged Series Switch for substations. These provide the foundation for advanced protection and control, remote diagnostics, and predictive maintenance capabilities.

In addition, when there's a need to extend connectivity to another part of the substation, Cisco Ultra-Reliable Wireless Backhaul provides fiber-like wireless backhaul performance.

Featuring ruggedized switches and routers, Cisco's open standards-based substation automation solutions enable utilities to:

- Improve remote monitoring of substation equipment and sensors for better visibility
- Reduce service disruptions with more timely equipment maintenance
- Improve productivity and lower costs by reducing multiple lease-line charges
- Manage existing legacy infrastructure while complying with new security mandates and industry standards

4. Distribution automation

Last-mile data communications networks are essential to realizing the full potential of the smart grid. Field area networks powered by the Cisco industrial routing portfolio, including the Cisco Catalyst IR1101 Rugged Router, support all the capabilities that drive the competitive edge of modern utilities, including high-efficiency distribution automation (DA), remote asset management, smart metering, and mobile workforce automation. Cisco multiservice networks are the foundation for enabling distributed power generation and energy storage, electric vehicle (EV) charging, microgrids, and more.

Cisco solutions for advanced metering infrastructure

Cisco stands out with industry-leading network management, security, and multiservice capabilities.

Products: Cisco Resilient Mesh/Wi-SUN RF mesh, Cisco IoT Field Network Director, Cisco Catalyst industrial routers.

Based on a flexible two-tier architecture, Cisco's field area network solutions enable utilities to:

- Seamlessly connect field devices to control centers
- Increase operational reliability through self-healing grids
- Reduce feeder losses
- Improve system performance using power-quality monitoring and distribution-level sensing
- Continue to leverage legacy assets rather than upgrading

Cisco solutions for mobile workforce

Cisco offers a total solution with fixed-mobile integration and full network-to-application coverage.

Products: Cisco Catalyst industrial wireless access points, Cisco Catalyst industrial routers, Webex by Cisco.

5. Advanced metering infrastructure

Advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) is a critical part of any smart grid initiative, enabling utilities to obtain real-time power consumption data and allowing customers to make informed choices about energy usage. Unlike legacy electricity meters, AMI-based smart meters are capable of two-way communication with the utility network.

Cisco leads in the design and deployment of communications networks that drive smart metering systems, and we're taking that a step further with the introduction of the new Cisco Catalyst IR8100 Heavy Duty Series Routers. Currently, we offer solutions in the 900-MHz band, used primarily by utilities in North America, Latin America, and Asia Pacific, Japan, and China (APJC). Neighborhood area networks powered by Cisco, interconnect smart meters—as well as streetlights and distributed energy resources – using multiple wireless technologies such as: Wisun RF Mesh, PLC, Cellular, LoRaWAN.

Our flexible AMI solutions enable utilities to:

- Scale to connect millions of smart meters
- Provide over-the-air meter firmware upgrades
- Remotely connect and disconnect power from meter to load
- Deliver power outage and restoration notifications
- Receive alerts when meters have been damaged

6. Mobile workforce

A highly mobile workforce is critical to quickly finding and fixing power outages—and keeping customers happy. That's why more utilities are adopting Cisco's utility fleet management solution, which provides a secure, always-on mobile network in and around the maintenance vehicle. Field workers can now collaborate more easily and optimize their safety, reliability, and efficiency. Here are some of the benefits utilities have realized with the Cisco utility fleet management solution:

- Faster customer response time and reduced carbon footprint with location-aware dispatching
- Increased employee safety with wearable health monitors
- Lower fuel costs (by as much as 30 percent) and fewer speeding citations with real-time location, speed, and idle time tracking
- Improved crew communications using text, voice, and video with the Webex by Cisco collaboration solution



The Cisco difference

Cisco's smart grid and networking solutions form a unified portfolio of solutions that help utilities modernize, reduce risk, and innovate. But what makes Cisco the first choice for digitizing utilities? Consider the following:

Unrivaled security expertise

Cisco is the clear industry leader in network security. No other solution provider can match Cisco's technology firsts, the breadth and depth of its product portfolio, and the continuing commitment to innovation. Cisco takes an integrated approach to security, intelligently connecting each part of the utility value chain—and every network asset—to create a unified, centrally managed whole network. And Cisco keeps innovating, pushing the envelope of what's possible in the field of physical and cyber security. The new Cisco Secure Network Analytics (Stealthwatch), and Cisco Cybervision for OT asset visibility and vulnerability identification solutions, for example, are setting new standards for anomaly detection and risk reduction.

Comprehensive grid management capabilities

Cisco is breaking new ground in distributed control and real-time management of energy grids. Cisco's Evolved Programmable Network Manager, for instance, provides simplified, converged, end-to-end lifecycle management for carrier-grade networks of all sizes. These real-time management capabilities allow utilities to achieve new levels of customer service—for instance, by adjusting the grid, as well as prices, in response to changing consumer demand. Furthermore, Cisco's multiservice network architecture delivers high levels of availability and resiliency while keeping capital costs under control.

Setting the pace in IoT

For many years, Cisco IoT has been delivering purpose-built products for utilities, including industrial-grade Cisco Catalyst routers and switches—which deliver all the advancements of the latest enterprise network capabilities while at the same time fully supporting utilities with IEC 61850-3 and IEEE 1613 certifications.

Cisco IoT networking products share the same technology as networking products from the enterprise, making them interoperable with the full network stack, so you can scale with confidence.

Commitment to interoperability and open standards

With Cisco, utilities are never locked into closed, proprietary technologies and protocols that support only a single service. Cisco has long been committed to network vendor interoperability, as evidenced by its support for standards organizations such as the Wireless Smart Utility Alliance (WiSUN). The WiSUN effort is helping drive the development of interoperable utility applications that take advantage of decades of networking expertise available



Figure 2. All Cisco Catalyst industrial routers are field upgradable (IR8140 shown)

within the IP suite. Cisco's commitment to interoperability helps utilities simplify systems, lower costs, and improve uptime.

Backed by loyal customers and partners worldwide

Utilities that invest in Cisco digital utilities solutions take advantage of a deep network of resources, including:

- Strong partner ecosystem: Leverage more than a thousand technology and consulting companies dedicated to supporting Cisco products and services.
- Cisco Validated Designs: Access proven utility IoT solutions that address a broad range of use cases in substation automation, DA, AMI, and grid security.
- End-to-end support: Access strategy, design, deployment, and managed services provided by Cisco Advanced Services.
- Global installed base: Harness the expertise of thousands of end users running industry-leading Cisco solutions worldwide.

Innovating with Cisco

Many of the world's leading utilities are modernizing and automating their grids with Cisco technologies.

Duke Energy: Modernizing cost-effectively

One of the largest electric power companies in North America, Duke Energy, based in Charlotte, North Carolina, has been steadily expanding its substation and distribution networks. Aging equipment, however, made it hard to get real-time telemetry data from the grid, while budget constraints prevented expensive upgrades.

Duke found a solution in Cisco's smart grid technologies, deploying Cisco industrial routers and switches as the foundation for a modern integrated power grid network. The cost-effective new architecture extended Duke's corporate IP infrastructure to substation operations and allowed implementation of centralized security and automated management systems. As a result, Duke Energy:

- Created a flexible, intelligent foundation for cross-company applications
- Improved substation security and visibility
- Implemented better monitoring and logging of telemetry data

"To fully leverage the benefits of digital technology, Duke Energy is taking an end-to-end approach with a smart grid that includes digital technologies on substations such as Cisco's Connected Grid solutions," said Mark Wyatt, vice president of Duke Energy's smart grid and energy systems program.

Enel – Turna (primary) – Secondary, Innogy, Enedis, Enel.

Next steps

Faced with a rapidly changing market and technology landscape, utilities and energy companies are under pressure to adapt and innovate. But for companies and critical infrastructure providers that embrace the new environment, opportunities abound to increase consumer satisfaction and propel growth and profitability. Cisco's digital solutions and industry-specific validated designs for utilities are engineered to help these utilities thrive as the industry continues to evolve in the years ahead.

Learn more

Explore Cisco Validated Designs for [Utilities](#).

[Contact Cisco IoT](#)

Transforming into a digital utility

A Canadian electric utility serving 1.8 million customers through a network of hydroelectric, natural gas, and thermal-powered facilities, has been a leader in digital transformation. It has launched a series of initiatives to enable remote grid automation and monitoring, as well as connected applications over a common networking infrastructure.

Recently the utility designed a smart grid infrastructure based on the Cisco field area network architecture with AML. To bolster security, it deployed the Cisco Identity Services Engine and firewalls. And to lay the groundwork for future innovation, it has engaged Cisco Advanced Services to explore IoT and network optimization opportunities. To date, the utility has:

- Increased data collection from once every two months to twice a day
- Effectively managed power outages
- Improved visibility for remote devices across the grid

SDEE Muntenia Nord: Building a secure, stable, and predictable network

Protecting market share and boosting IT and operational security were top priorities for SDEE Muntenia Nord, a leading electrical utility in Romania's mountainous north region. Equally important was reducing the number of planned and unplanned interruptions to satisfy an increasingly demanding customer base. Since investing in Cisco smart grid and networking solutions, the utility has been hitting its marks. It leveraged Cisco industrial routers and network-embedded microservices to automate electrical distribution. Then it deployed an innovative Cisco IoT architecture to centralize security for applications, data, the network, and user access.

As a result, SDEE Muntenia Nord:

- Gained real-time visibility into the business for quick response to what is happening in the field
- Significantly reduced the risk of service disruptions and security threats—both cyber and physical
- Created a secure, stable, and predictable network with a predictable cost structure