



Stars out for big challenge

REACH for the stars – that's the challenge being issued to Manweb staff.

Stars of stage and screen visited the Neuromuscular Centre in Winsford, Cheshire, to launch the Manweb Celebrity Challenge – a massive fund-raising drive to help people with muscular dystrophy and allied neuromuscular conditions.

The idea of the Manweb-sponsored challenge is to raise £120,000 towards a new extension at the centre, and

hopefully our own staff will give the appeal an extra boost.

TV star Matthew Kelly, who was recently guest of honour at the Manweb-Chronicle Community Awards, is pictured with fellow celebrities Dame Hilda Bracket and 'Howard's Way' actress Tracey Childs, and Neuromuscular Centre 'trainee' Jackie Connor at the star-studded launch of the Challenge.

Full story – page 6.

BILLS SET TO FALL



POLICY DUE THIS YEAR

MANWEB is to introduce a Childcare Support Policy based on a voucher system during 1994.

Details of the Policy and how childcare vouchers work, together with the analysis of the Childcare questionnaire sent to staff in January, will be published in the next edition of 'Contact'.

MANWEB has announced that electricity bills for its 1.2 million domestic customers will fall by approximately four per cent over the next 12 months.

Customers will benefit by reductions worth £16 million. There will be a rebate of £10, which is being credited to each customer's account, and domestic electricity prices were reduced by one per cent on 1 April.

These measures follow a reduction of one per cent in July 1993, and mean that since April 1991, prices will have fallen almost 10 per cent in real terms.

The average bill for a domestic customer in 1991/92 was £327. If this had increased in line with inflation, the 1994/95 figure would have been £351. With these latest changes, the same average customer can expect to pay only £317 before VAT – a real saving of £34.

Card meter and direct debit customers continue to receive a 0.75 per cent rebate on

unit charges in addition to the price reduction. Manweb's SELECT tariff, which includes no standing charge, is also reduced by one per cent.

Business customers on quarterly tariffs also benefit from the £10 rebate.

Two new tariffs are being introduced to

offer small business customers more opportunity to control their electricity costs.

John Roberts, Manweb's Chief Executive, said: "These reductions reflect the reduced purchase costs of electricity from the generating companies, and Manweb's own internal operating cost controls. We are committed to bringing electricity prices down while continuing to improve customer service."

HAPPY BIRTHDAY WILBY!

A YOUNG owl called Wilby has been helping Manweb for the past year in spreading its safety message to local primary schoolchildren. "Play Safe with Wilby and Manweb" will be celebrating its first anniversary with birthday cakes in primary schools in all parts of the Manweb region. This educational programme is based on electrical safety in the home and at play. It has been free to schools since 1991 and to date approximately 120,000 children in 5,000 classes have received the programme.

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SPRINGING TO THEIR DEFENCE PAGE 12



They're pass masters

LATEST successes in the financial world come from trainee accountants who have recently gained passes in their examinations for either the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) or the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).

Financial Controller John Couch praised their efforts and said he was delighted with their success.

The trainees and their passes are as follows:-

Judith Hunt, CIMA Stage IV (Finals); Graham Jones, CIMA Stage IV (Finals); Keith Jones, CIMA Stage IV (Finals); Mark Bellman, CIMA Stage IV (Finals); Paula Vickery, CIMA Stage III; John Taylor, CIMA Stage III; Mike Artell, CIMA Stage II; Shane Yates,

ACCA Stages D&E.

Pictured (l to r) are Mike Artell, Shaun Yates, Paula Vickery, John Couch, Graham Jones, Judith Hunt, Keith Jones and John Taylor. Unfortunately Mark Bellman was not available for the photograph.

... and a pass for David

SUCCESS came to the Treasury Department also, with Assistant Treasury Manager David Lawson passing examinations to become a Member of the Association of Corporate Treasurers.

David's tough examination subjects included corporate finance, capital markets and funding, currency management, liquidity management, treasury management, taxation and company law. David, who joined Manweb in 1990, previously worked for Barclays Bank in the City and General Motors Treasury Department.

A BSc (Hons) in Economics, David is married with two children and lives in Cuddington near Northwich.

NUMBERS UP

THE winner of the EEIBA's November draw was P. H. Williams, retired, who picked up a £300 prize with the lucky number 1139.

The £200 prize went to another retired employee, M. W. Jones, with the number 2069. The other prizewinners were: £150: B. Roberts, Gwynedd (1767); £100: R. P. Glover, Liverpool (1186); £75: D. Walley, Mid Cheshire (2732) and K. Stook, Head Office (920); £50: H. C. Foreman, retired (58); £30: J. Harrison, Mid Cheshire (416), A. R. Pooley, Head Office (378), R. Pennington, retired (517) and P. Irwin, retired (1411); £25: D. Garner, Head Office (688), A. F. E. Gibson, North Wirral (2404), B. H. Weston, Head Office (415), G. A. Bent, Head Office (192), W. J. Ratcliffe, retired (2354), A. L. Davies, retired (2193), C. M. Roberts, Head Office (253), K. Shone, Head Office (954)

and C. C. Williams, retired (1927).

In the December draw, the £300 prize was won by Head Office employee A. M. Dentith, with the lucky number 435. The other winners were: £200: A. R. Conde, Oswestry (1059); £150: J. Lockley, retired (1741); £100: H. W. Pope, retired (2384); £75: C. F. Edwards, Head Office (1108) and F. Chynoweth, retired (1599); £50: F. P. Evans, retired (1720); £30: W. P. Wright, retired (2135), G. A. Scarratts, Liverpool (1199) and T. J. Morris, Dee Valley (234); £25: A. T. Keeling, retired (1536), G. A. Williams, retired (2126), L. Hughes, retired (1619), W. E. Daniels, retired (113), I. M. Phelps, retired (2183), E. Hoxworth, retired (1485), A. M. Ellis, Head Office (660), J. E. Garrett, Clwyd (2613), M. H. Jeffries, North Wirral (2422) and L. M. Hughes, retired (1686).

And in the January draw, Aberystwyth employee A. R. Dickinson collected the top prize of £300 with the number 1815. The other winners were: £200: J. P. Parrish, Head Office (411); £150: G. A. Pleavin, Queensferry (599); £100: E. Doyle, retired (167); £75: H. O. Evans (328) and J. Griffith (291), both Head Office; £50: J. W. Ralphs, Mid Cheshire (1257); £30: P. Powell, Dee Valley (852), L. J. Corner, Head Office (2012), A. T. Churchman, retired (174) and S. F. Smith, retired (2387); £25: J. M. Williams, Dee Valley (764), J. W. Blain, retired (1901), T. Ferguson (322), J. Browne, retired (2241), J. W. Jones, retired (1985), W. A. Jones, retired (1609), R. McMurray, retired (2184), M. Garman, retired (1560) and A. D. Coleman, Head Office (1125).

CONTACT

The newspaper for staff and retired employees of Manweb plc, Sealand Road, Chester CH1 4LR, telephone 0244 652090.

If you've an idea for a story or photograph, write, phone or come and talk to Editor Jackie Unsworth in Public Relations, Room 5E1, Head Office, ext. 2090. At the following locations, you can talk directly to one of Contact's District correspondents.

North Mersey: Pat Shawext. 2204
 Liverpool: Harry Robertsonext. 2160
 Mid-Mersey: Mike Townsonext. 2231
 Dee Valley: Kath Sadowskiext. 2202
 North Wirral: Janet Fordext. 2360
 Mid-Cheshire: Diana Woodext. 2117
 Clwyd: Min Williamsext. 2340
 Gwynedd: Hefyn Thomasext. 2250
 Oswestry: Sandra Goodeext. 2114
 Aberystwyth: Gloria Griffithext. 2261
 Region 2: Liz Newmanext. 85504

TAKING STOCK

By Geoff Standing

AT the start of the month the vertical axis of the share price graph had to be extended to 850 pence to cater for the seemingly endless rise in Manweb plc's share price. However, by the end of the month the 700 pence line was being re-drawn.

(a) Upward trend

The start of the month showed a continuous rise in the FT-SE 100 index. A combination of sharply higher international stock markets, increased hopes of further UK interest rate cuts, and news of a big corporate deal, saw London share prices race ahead to record levels. On 2 February the FT-SE index penetrated the 3,500 level and reached a record high of 3,520.3.

The REC's share price continued to rise. The sector was boosted by news that the recently launched KBIM European Privatisation Investment Trust can invest up to 20 per cent of funds into the Utilities sector, and analysts repeated a recommendation on the sector focusing on future possible share buy-backs (see last month).

On 8 February, there was a quarter-point cut in the UK base lending rates, from 5.50 per cent to 5.25 per cent.

(b) Downward trend

Manweb plc's share price reached a high of 850 pence early on the next day, but later prices fell back sharply, one of the analysts having removed Manweb and other RECs from its 'buy' list, quoting that the shares had "performed very well" since November. The inevitable profit-taking was taking place.

Coinciding with the winter Olympics in Lillehammer, events were to be mainly downhill from here!

The fall in the FT-SE 100 index was dominated by trends in international bond markets. The US Federal Reserve

let short-term interest rates rise for the first time in five years and stated that US interest rates were still more likely to rise than fall. Bond prices worldwide fell.

As bond prices fall, yields on them rise, making shares look relatively less attractive.

On 10 February, regulatory worries upset the RECs prompting sharp decreases in share prices.

NatWest Securities had raised concern over their vulnerability to adverse news during the discussions with OFFER. The broker also believed that selected stocks had been overbought.

The RECs recorded reductions in price of between 20 and 45 pence in one day. Manweb's price fell 38 pence.

On 11 February, OFFER announced a decision not to refer the two English power generators to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The announcement included a price cap in the wholesale electricity pool over the next two years, and it was suggested that this could have an adverse effect on the RECs, heralding a tighter regime on pricing. Prices were pushed lower.

(c) Upward trend

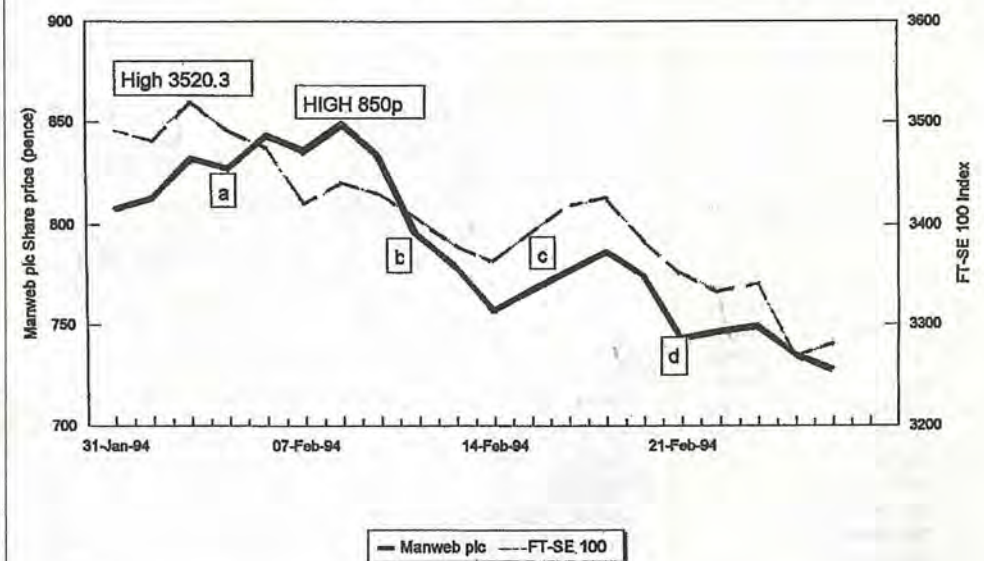
The recent weakness in the market was viewed by investors as a buying opportunity pushing prices up. Indications of a slowing economy and tame inflation revived hopes of a further cut in interest rates. The RECs followed the general line of the market.

(d) Downward trend

The RECs' prices fell sharply again. There were rumours in the market, generated by a report in the Financial Times, suggesting that the next regulatory review (on the distribution business) could have an adverse impact on profits. Profit-taking also contributed to these falls.

The market ended the month at its lowest level since mid-December amid fears of a rising pace of inflation in the US. Civil unrest in Russia and disappointment over the size of a French interest rate cut also contributed to the fall.

Manweb plc Share Price & FT-SE 100 Index
February 1994



If you have any further queries on these matters, your professional adviser, bank, tax office or building society will probably be best placed to help you.

PARTNERSHIP GROWS

A GROWING partnership is developing between Manweb and Cheshire Special Landscape Project.

The project aims to promote and secure the conservation and improvement of the landscapes of Cheshire.

Part of the project's activities involve volunteers, formalised through the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV).

The Company has agreed to pay for trees, shrubs and hedging to complement the funding of volunteers' expenses by Cheshire County Council.

The partnership also provides an avenue by which parish councils, local schools and community groups can approach BTCV for advice, which is given free.

The latest scheme, in which Manweb is offering support, is the improvement of Dane Valley, an area of special landscape value in the Holmes Chapel and Congleton areas.

The Company has donated oak, ash, alder, hazel and other native saplings to help improve the woodlands. The Dane Valley is designated as an area of special landscape value and a site of biological importance. To further assist the project which is being run on limited funding, the Company has donated a van.

Local conservation volunteer groups have already started a planting programme, vis-

iting six woodlands, with the remainder being completed next winter.

Arthur Elson, Projects Manager, Mid Cheshire District, who liaises with Project Officer Kevin Jones, is keen to spread the word on behalf of this worthwhile organisation.

"I have a list of contact names and num-

bers (printed here) so that any of our staff who wish to assist in these volunteer projects can take an active part."

Since April 1993 the Company has agreed sponsorship for the planting of 3,816 trees, shrubs and bushes as well as for other community related projects.

See 'Green Issues', page 8.

GROUP CONTACTS

Halton Midweek Conservation Volunteers. c/o Richard Cormack, BTCV, Trafford Water Mill, Warrington Road, Mickle Trafford, Chester CH2 4EB. Tel. 0244 300230.

Chester Midweek Conservation Volunteers. c/o Richard Cormack, BTCV, Trafford Water Mill, Warrington Road, Mickle Trafford, Chester CH2 4EB. Tel. 0244 300230.

Chester Nature Conservation Volunteers. Sarah Barker, 40 Hartington Street, Handbridge, Chester CH4 7BW. Tel. 0244 676543.

Vale Royal Conservation

Volunteers. Nick Bowman, The Manor House, Great Budworth, Northwich. Tel. 0606 891431.

Congleton & District Conservation Group. Mike Horrey, 19 Malhamdale Road, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 2DA. Tel. 0260 277090.

Cheshire Landscape Trust/Community Landscape Project. John Gittins, Fountains Building, Upper Northgate Street, Chester CH1 4EF. Tel. 0244 376016.

Crewe & Nantwich Conservation Volunteers. Wendy Northrop, 8 Moathouse

Drive, Crewe, Cheshire. Tel. 0270 257255.

Three Counties Conservation Volunteers. Sue Witchalls, Rose Tree Cottage, Tallorn Green, Malpas, Cheshire SY14 7LL. Tel. 0948 81644.

Mike Taylor (West Cheshire). Countryside Offices, 40A Church Street, Davenham, Northwich CW9 8NF. Tel. 0606 331224.

Dave Kitching (East Cheshire). Remenham House, Chapel Lane, Wilmslow SK9 1PM. Tel. 0625 534796.



Customer FOCUS

Taking the cake

MISS Mari Roberts, who has developed a thriving small business at Yr Hen Ysgo (The Old School) building at Pentrefoelas, recently expanded her business, and took over the entire premises which had previously been home to three small businesses. She requested that all the premises be billed off a single meter arrangement. After a site survey, a convenient appointment was made and the job completed by Clwyd electrician Roy Camp.

Miss Roberts kindly sent a delicious cake to Customer Service staff as a token of her appreciation for their efforts.

HELP JOHN RUN FOR MONEY



Marathon man John Neal, pictured after a training session at 6.30am.

A DAMAGED knee following a lifetime of playing rugby forced John Neal to take up running.

Now John, Resource Allocator Project Manager, is running into peak condition for a tilt at the London marathon.

At the age of 42, when many men might be reaching for their slippers, John has been putting on his running shoes to clock up 50 miles a week since the start of the year.

He hopes that on Marathon day, Sunday, 17 April, he will be sharp enough to finish in four and a half hours. He is also hoping to raise as much money as possible for his chosen charity, The Motor Neurone Disease

Association.

"I chose the Association because it is a well organised charity and because one of my heroes, the late David Niven, was a sufferer."

John's target is £500 of sponsorship and he would welcome any donations from Manweb employees. "I would also like to hear from anyone in Manweb who might be running in the Marathon as perhaps we could run as a pair," said John.

Anyone who would like to help can contact John at Head Office, ext. 2387.

Russians find out at Manweb

STAFF at Gwynedd district office had a shock when it was announced that 'The Russians are coming'.

No one headed for the bunkers, however, when it was explained that the five-strong group were senior representatives from the Russian state power industry, here on nothing more sinister than a fact-finding mission.

The visit dramatically demonstrated how Russia is opening up to Western ideals. They came not to learn how a privatised utility like Manweb operates, but also about concepts that we take for granted - customer service for example.

Andrei Vladislavovich, speaking through an interpreter, said: "We have enjoyed our visit here very much, and look forward to coming back soon." Manweb Network Services Training and Development Manager Rodger Hemington, who helped organise the trip, said: "We're pleased to be doing our bit to foster East-West relations. We hope the Russians will be able to apply back home the many new skills they have experienced."

The Russians, who are all from the city of Kazan, east of Moscow, came over to Britain on a programme run by the University of Wales.

Pictured (l-r): Andrei Galyaich, District Manager Ian Basford, Andrei Vladislavovich.



Taking it easy

ANN PRITCHARD plans to take it easy and have a holiday with her husband now she is retired after 20 years' company service.

An Administration Supervisor in Trading Division, Ann was based for most of her career at Prenton, spending only the last 10 weeks at Queensferry.

She is pictured at Queensferry, with her colleagues, being presented with an electric typewriter and necklace by George Roberts, Operations Manager, Trading.

Customer FOCUS

CONTINUING our series of articles on the progress of Manweb's Customer Service programme, this month we focus on the Billing and Settlement projects currently being developed. Special reports by Tony Harper, Carole Poland, Phil Dumayne, Dave Barratt and Ann Evans.

THESE PROJECTS FIT INTO THE OVERALL PLAN

Two-way Benefits

THE overall aim of the Customer Focus Programme is a swift move to the "high quality, low cost utility" position we have set for the Company, coupled with preparations for future success in the emerging world of utility service competition.

The Billing and Settlement projects fit neatly into this overall programme in two ways. They offer short term customer service improvements and cost savings – and extend Manweb's ability to handle the growing technical complexities of the future, whilst securing greater customer loyalty.

Cutting Confusion, Reducing Anxiety

Both market research and day-to-day experience in the shops and regions indicate that our bills are far from easy to understand and our payment options, whilst welcome, are confusing. Partly as a result of this confusion, debt levels are rising and so are the number of enquiries about exactly what we are trying to communicate with our bills, statements, follow-up letters and card meter readings.

The Bill Review and Debt Management Projects are designed to make an immediate impact on this confusion, to reduce anxiety and to set down a basis for a far more positive dialogue with customers about how we can, indeed, make life easier for them.

Moving Forward

The Card Metering – or Pay as You Go – Project is partly designed to deal with current confusion, not least with the present Conref and Value Cards. The biggest single impact on the problem is likely to be made by SmartCards which are described briefly in the accompanying article.

This is just one example of the way in which we are testing the introduction of new technology into the billing and settlement process, as the article on advanced metering indicates. The aim is to make sure that customers' need for clear but directly relevant information is matched to services suited to their individual circumstances and reflecting their choices of how to deal with us.

Continual Development

However important the individual projects might be in moving Manweb towards its 'high quality, low cost' utility vision, the whole area of billing and settlement allows us to recognise the scale of continual day-by-day development in our customer service delivery. Around half

of Manweb staff are involved in some way in the billing, cash receipting and settlement processes. This wealth of 'front end' knowledge has driven a whole series of service improvements and provided plenty of scope to practise the Achieving Extraordinary Customer Service skills. The current projects are designed to add impetus to this process – and to remove some of the larger barriers to effective dialogue with customers which have now been overtaken by developments in both technology and inter-personal skills.



Service to suit individual circumstances.

What's of debt

SmartCard offers a two-way system

A PROJECT has been initiated to pilot and introduce SmartCard Meters within the Company. SmartCard Meters can replace the existing card meter technology and is also an alternative, hi-tech method of paying for electricity for a wider range of customers.

SmartCard Meters offer a direct 'two way' communications system between the user and the supplier as opposed to the conventional 'one way' system. How does this work?

Customers are issued with a SmartCard which looks like a credit card but has a silicon chip embedded in it. This card is used not only by the customer to purchase electricity but can be utilised to perform tasks without the need for access to the metering equipment by Manweb staff. This is achieved by passing information through point of sale and Fortronic equipment to the SmartCard and from the SmartCard to the meter and back again. Information is automatically transferred to the mainframe through the system. It is anticipated that SmartCard technol-

ogy will resolve numerous operational problems that exist with current card meters, eg manual resetting and being able to use value cards in any meter. Additional benefits also include:

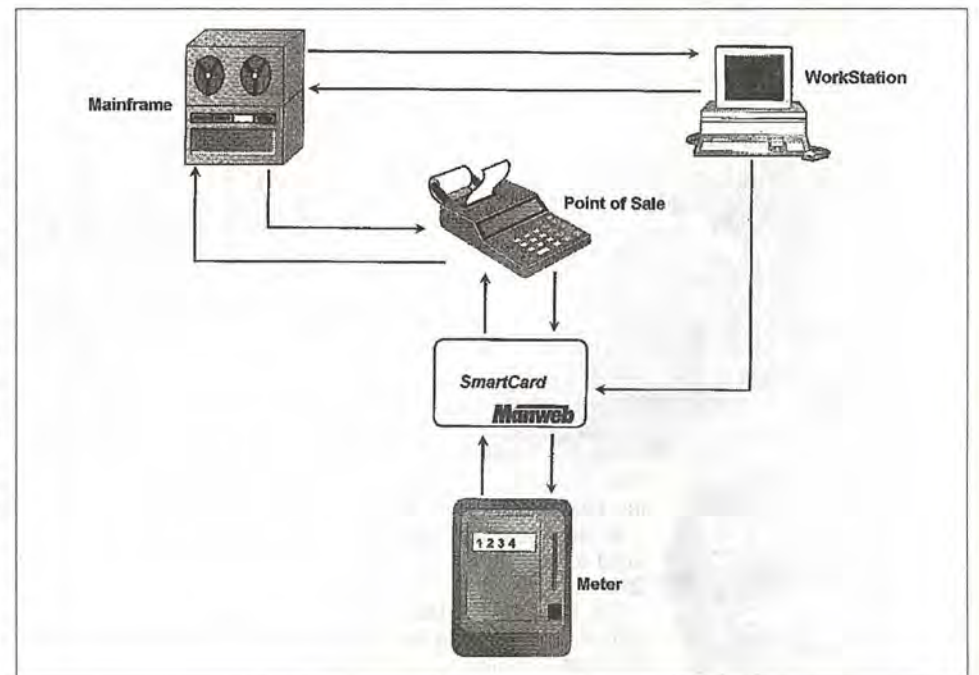
- improved customer service
- sending out of new operating instructions without the need for on-

- site visits
- reduced operating costs
- better system management
- reduced risk from theft and fraud

It is proposed to pilot an initial Smart Meter system within the Company to establish the viability of the new technology and systems. The pilot exercise is scheduled to begin in the spring of this year.

Subject to the pilot being successful, a training and communications programme will be established. All staff will be given regular updates on the progress of the project and the pilot.

If anyone wants any further information regarding the SmartCard Project please route all enquiries through the Income Project Office (OFFICE



the effect on business?

DEBT! What an easy word to say, but one which may have struck an uneasy feeling in most of us at some time or another, writes Phil Dumayne.

During the last few years, Manweb has seen a slow but steady increase in the level of outstanding debt owed to the Company. There are many reasons for this, but the most obvious has been the recession we are slowly emerging from.

When I was seconded to this project, there was a great deal of jargon that I had heard of before but not necessarily understood. Phrases like 'follow up', RSVP, CUDOS, CP2s, ACOs, reminders. What did they all mean? (Well, OK, I knew what the last one meant!). I was soon to be put right by the rest of the team who joined me in October.

But debt (or debtors) is a serious concern for those in business. Manweb customers who are overdue with payment for their electricity bill have a number of effects on our business. They are:

- increased operating costs to recover the money
- reduced cash flow for the company
- reduced profitability due to debt 'write off'.

Bob McMahon, Head of Income, was all too aware of this during the past 12 months and commissioned a project team to look at the effect of 'bad debt' and to come up with ways of dealing with it more effectively.

The project commenced on 19 October, 1993, and was headed by myself on secondment from Network Services, Dee Valley. The other members of the team were brought in from various parts of the business where they had expertise. They are John Lawes, Lynn Mountford, Alan English, Phil Keable and Amanda Nelson.

The project also draws upon the experience of the Power Marketing Divisional Accountant Adrian Harling who, with his team, is looking at the debt statistics and analysing ways of producing statistical information for the Regions to use in controlling debt.

The project was split into a number of sub-projects that would look at all areas where we control and handle debt. They are:

Project looks at all the areas

- Current procedures and systems that are in use
- How we communicate with customers in a debt situation
- Analysis of our current debt control structure
- Statistical and financial modelling
- Customer lifestyles and payment profiles

Early trends that we have deduced from the above work suggests that we will be able to increase cash flow, reduce 'write-offs' and provide a better service to our customers. There are various initiatives which, if introduced, will be able to achieve all of the above.

One area where we will endeavour to proceed is the process of collecting accounts by telephone. An automatic dialling system is currently being evaluated to assess its suitability for Manweb. Many other companies are now using this system both in the USA and the UK with excellent results. The capital costs for the system is normally recovered in less than 12 months.

The project is due for completion around May of this year and, hopefully, the benefits will start to be realised before the end of this financial year.

THE AMR (Advanced Meter Reading) trial will involve 1,000 domestic customers in Mid-Cheshire district. Meters will be installed from June 1994 onwards, and offer significant benefits to customers.

The trial will run until January 1996, at which time its success will be reviewed.

The main features are:

- meters can be read remotely, without need for a visit. Readings can be taken as often as required - for example, when a customer moves house or wishes to change tariff
- data is automatically transferred from the meter to local substations via the mains network. From each substation, information is regularly transferred
- a customer display will also be offered to some of the customers on the trial. This will offer information on payments, and will calculate the value and timing of their next bill. It also offers price information for customers on multi-rate tariffs
- the customer display will be an essential part of the trial for pre-

A TRIAL OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

back to Head Office via phone lines

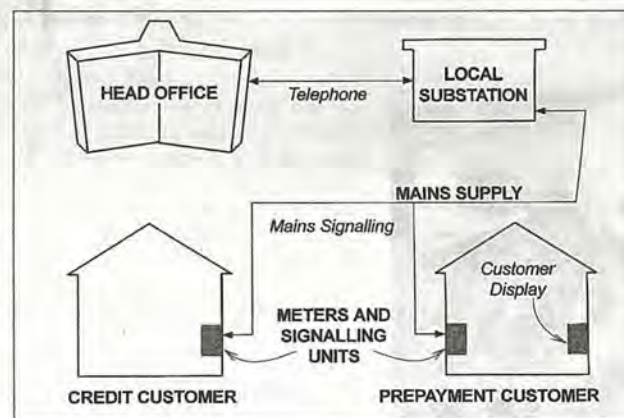
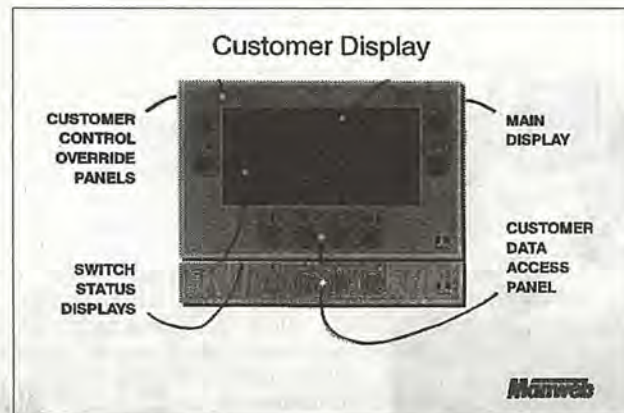
payment customers. The meter receives messages about payments made by the customer, and hence can control credit levels.

"Emergency credit" will operate in a similar way to card meters, but audible and visible warnings will be given to the customer when credit falls below a certain level.

In addition to remote meter reading and prepayment, other benefits can be seen. Profiles of electricity usage will be collected for all customers on the trial, and matched against questionnaire data. This will be used to design new tariffs and products to offer customers greater choice. The meters will also have "tamper flags" built in which will signal interruptions to, or interference with, the supply.

In the longer term, substation loadings and customer demands can be linked with other systems such as GIS (Geographical Information System) to improve usage of the distribution network and hence the quality of supply to customers.

The AMR trial is of strategic importance to Manweb. It demonstrates our willingness to invest in new technology and develop new products appropriate to the competitive market of 1998. It also offers the opportunity to try new products and payments systems on a wide range of customer types.



AIMING TO KEEP IT SIMPLE

FOR many customers, the bill is the only form of contact they have with us. To them, the bill represents the overall corporate image and as such has a major role to play in conveying the appropriate customer service messages.

In addition, the bill is the one document that every customer receives and as such presents a major opportunity to impress all our customers with a fresh, updated new look.

A team of design consultants was recruited to assist us in this process. The brief was simple:

"Customers should only have to contact us about their bill for advice on how to budget or to advise us of a change of address."

Taking this as a starting point we were then able to develop a set of design guidelines, based on an overwhelming desire to keep it simple.

Our design objectives were:

- clear easily understood bills or statements tailored to suit each payment method
- we should acknowledge receipt of previous payments, thanking the customer as we do so
- highlight key (and relevant) customer service advice

And finally, the new designs should enable us to talk to our customers in a clear and consistent voice by presenting an image easily recognisable as 'Manweb'.

What will the benefits be?

By recognising the importance of delivering a well-designed, easy-to-understand bill or statement, we hope our customers will respond through loyalty and speedier payments, thus reducing the number of reminders and follow-up correspondence.

By improving the overall effectiveness of communicating key information to customers we

hope to reduce the number of customer queries. This will result in a better allocation of existing resources, to address real customer issues rather than explaining to the customer how their bill works. Finally, by improving the overall design and appearance of our billing documents so that they present Manweb as an efficient and professional organisation.

As well as generating benefits for the customers, there are also additional business benefits to be gained for Manweb plc. By investing in new technology now, we can introduce a level of flexibility in billing, which no other utility in the UK can match. This will enable us to promote and bill on a single document other services which support our strategy and position us to take full advantage of open competition in 1998.

Progress to date

The detailed requirement for

each payment method has been specified and researched with our customers, both business and domestic.

Alternative designs have been assessed through customer research and through discussions with those sections involved in delivering customer service. One design clearly emerged as a favourite.

New printing facilities are on order, which will enable us to personalise key information for customers and highlight it by the use of colour.

The phased introduction of new style bills will begin in May with card meter customers and follow through July and October with quarterly credit and direct debit customers.

The future?

By Christmas we should be well on the way to realising our overriding customer service aim and in the process reduce confusion, anxiety and irritation.

Standards praised

FIVE Manweb Districts and two regions started 1994 in fine style by making no guaranteed standards of service payments during January.

Chief Executive John Roberts has written to District Managers Mike Jones (North Mersey), Barry Judd (Mid Mersey), John Macdonald (Dee Valley), Jeff Hunt (Mid Cheshire) and Ian Basford (Gwynedd) and also to Customer Accounting Managers Kevin Mawdsley (Region 2) and Ray Hall (Region 3), asking them to pass on his congratulations to all their staff for this 'high standard of performance'.

In addition he has sent a letter of congratulations to District Managers Bill Tubey (Liverpool), Phil Ramsey (North Wirral) and Alison Eakins (Aberystwyth), for having made just one payment during the month.

IT was a star-studded occasion when TV personality Matthew Kelly and a group of celebrity friends launched a Manweb-sponsored fund-raising challenge to the people of the North West and North Wales.

Matthew, host of the popular show 'You Bet', was joined by comedienne Helen Atkinson-Wood, of 'Blackadder' fame, Dame Hilda Bracket and 'Howard's Way' actress Tracey Childs to drum up support for the Manweb Celebrity Challenge, a massive drive to raise money for a unique centre which helps people with muscular dystrophy and allied neuromuscular conditions.

The Neuromuscular Centre (NMC) in

YOU BET

Matthew will win the fund-raising challenge

Winsford, Cheshire, has changed the lives of many young people from throughout Manweb's region, and has the potential to help many more - with the help of the public.

Services

Manweb is supporting the Celebrity Challenge in a variety of ways, initially by providing the

By Jackie Unsworth

services of the Printing Department at Head Office to produce all the promotional material associated with the event.

Then, at the end of the Challenge in July, Manweb will host a star-studded 'thank you' party for up to 500 top fund-raisers. Matthew and his friends will be present to say 'thank you' in person.

Matthew, the NMC's Vice President, said: "The idea of the Challenge is to raise £120,000 towards a new extension, which will allow the centre to work with many more muscular dystrophy sufferers."

Charitable

"We have to raise the money because another charitable trust will match this sum and then we can start work on the new building. That will double our size, enabling us to take double the number of people."

Matthew, who dubbed the Challenge a telethon without the television, added: "There are many ways people can raise money. Sit in a tub of beans,

shave your hair off, we don't mind!"

All sorts of people have already accepted Matthew's challenge to organise fund-raising events for the NMC. Anyone who raises over £100 for the Centre can choose from an assortment of signed celebrity prizes, including tee-shirts from Matthew baseball hats from Su Pollard, photos from Linda Lusardi, hankies from Dame Hilda Bracket and footballs from soccer star David Platt.

Matthew's wife, Sarah, who works at the NMC as a Co-ordinator, said: "Everyone is welcome to join in, and we hope Manweb staff will also take part."

"The Centre is unique and helps people from all over the region. Many of those affected by muscular dystrophy and allied neuromuscular conditions are young people who have been confined to a wheelchair for much of their lives. Once their school years are over, there is often, quite literally, nothing to do. The NMC has changed their lives."

Procedures

In addition to providing physiotherapy, the Centre offers training in business procedures. Using adapted computers and other technology, the 'trainees' work as graphic designers, book-keepers and in general office and secretarial roles.

Leaflets giving further information about the Manweb Celebrity Challenge are now being distributed throughout the region.

Packs

Event packs containing details about the Centre, celebrities' ideas for fund-raising and practical tips on how to organise an event are available from: The Neuromuscular Centre, Freepost CW590, Woodford Lane West, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 4BR, or contact the Manweb Celebrity Challenge Office on 0606 861733.



Blackadder actress Helen Atkinson-Wood meets trainee Mike Jackson.



Stars in her eyes... Liza Grzadieleska (centre) with Matthew Kelly and Dame Hilda Bracket.



NMC Vice President Matthew Kelly and his wife Sarah, who works at the Centre, with trainees Steve Ryder and Lorraine Woolley.



Transport Business Unit personnel in their refurbished offices (l to r) Doug Hardie, Terry, Claire Anderson, Peter Stansfield and Pat Piercy. Kathryn Newman who works in the depart

TRANSP MOVES KEEP AT

MANWEB Transport is to cut the charges for vehicles this year. The Transport Business Unit acts as an internal contract hire company, leasing vehicles and plant to the rest of the Company. The reduction will be 10% in real terms from when the rates were set two years ago.

The £5.5 million Business Unit took control of transport in 1990 and manages a fleet of 2,000 vehicles and plant plus 500 company cars. The Transport Manager, Dave Stevenson, heads a team of 72 staff at 15 garages and Head Office.

Last year independent transport consultants conducted a Strategy Review. "They put us under the microscope," said Dave, "identified our strengths and weaknesses and set down a three year plan to make us more competitive. We're working to that plan and it's starting to pay off."

Expertise in fleet management and accountancy has been brought in by the appointment of two new faces; Terry Jarvis and Steve Paterson. A new computer system has been installed in all garages in record time. "I must thank not only transport staff but also our IS colleagues," said Terry. "Everybody pulled together to do the impossible. Our first priority is to give quality service to our internal customers. The new system provides the basis for a more professional approach."

Although the emphasis is on internal

services, the Strategy Review opened opportunities for cooperation with other 'utilities'. Manweb Transport joined with Welsh Water and Water in a consortium for vehicles.

Specifications Engineer I who is responsible for buying the Company's vehicle and plant. "This obviously gives us more buying power and enables us to put our philosophy of obtaining value at low cost."

Appropriate specification for the whole life cost has led to the choice of model. Already new Combos and Ford Transits can be seen sporting the Manweb livery.

Vehicles as purchased are a significant additional cost to them suitable for operation. This work is now central to New Vehicle Preparation (NVP) at the Lister Drive garage. The NVP will be in direct competition with side contractors for fitting with tool boxes, racking and other facilities for gas bottles. In this area it is important to get the balance between customer choice and cost. "With free choice we would have many different vehicles a Manweb drivers," says Dave. "It's a significant cost benefit in itself."

There is also a very wide range of specialist vehicles and p



Transport Business Unit personnel in their refurbished offices (l to r) Doug Hardie, Terry Jarvis, Andrea McGinley, Joe Cleary, Steve Paterson, Dave Stevenson, Claire Anderson, Peter Stansfield and Pat Piercy. Kathryn Newman who works in the department was not available for the photograph.



TRANSPORT MOVES TO KEEP AHEAD

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services, the Strategy Review recognised opportunities for cooperation with other 'utilities'. Manweb Transport has joined with Welsh Water and Wessex Water in a consortium for purchasing vehicles.

Specifications Engineer Doug Hardie, who is responsible for buying all the Company's vehicle and plant, says: "This obviously gives us more purchasing power and enables us to maintain our philosophy of obtaining high quality at low cost."

Appropriate specification at the best whole life cost has led to recent changes of model. Already new Vauxhall Combos and Ford Transits and Fiestas can be seen sporting the Manweb livery.

Vehicles as purchased can require significant additional work to make them suitable for operational purposes. This work is now centralised in the New Vehicle Preparation (NVP) unit at Lister Drive garage. The NVP section will be in direct competition with outside contractors for fitting out vehicles with tool boxes, racking and safe storage facilities for gas bottles etc. In this area it is important to get the right balance between customer choice and cost. "With free choice we would have as many different vehicles as there are Manweb drivers," says Dave. "There is significant cost benefit in standardisation."

There is also a very wide range of specialist vehicles and plant, from



Noel Harris at Rhyll working on a Welsh Water Vehicle.

small cross-country balloon tyred quad bikes to 17 tonne tipper grabs for road works. Manweb is the first Regional Electricity Company to start using insulated platforms for hands-on work on live overhead lines. They allow the linesman to work in comfort and safety from an insulated basket at the top of the mobile structure.

A requirement for cross-country capability prompted the choice of Mercedes Unimog vehicles as the best buy.

During the last six months a new trailer tower for street lighting work has been introduced. Towed behind a Land Rover, this unit provides a stable, 30ft high working platform.

Trials are also underway in Warrington on an electricity driven vehicle. Add to all this two purpose built vehicles to transport Jet Trac, trenchless excavating equipment - now being



Top: Alan Waring (Prenton) runs a diagnostic check. Above

developed in Liverpool - and the picture is one of a modern professional department providing a top class service.

Cooperation with Welsh Water extends to vehicle maintenance. At Rhyll Manweb fitters maintain Welsh Water vehicles with a reciprocal arrangement at Glan Conwy. As well as reducing costs it gives opportunity to test Transport's ability to do external work.

All the garages have come in for revitalisation, the latest diagnostic equipment is now operating in most locations. "This facilitates full engine tuning and allows us to comply with anti-pollution legislation," said Fleet Engineer Joe Cleary. "We can easily comply with current exhaust emission requirements in petrol and diesel driven vehicles."

A mobile, four column lift which can be manoeuvred into any position in the workshop is a boost to efficiency. It gives increased flexibility as there is no longer the need for a fixed lift or pit. This consequently reduces the down time.

"With rapidly evolving technology we have to keep one step ahead," says Joe. "All our fitters are fully qualified and, more importantly, they keep abreast of developments by attending appropriate training courses."

It is this commitment to being the best and most efficient that has helped the Transport Business Unit to cut its prices and look to the future with confidence.



Terry Jarvis, Andrea McGinley, Joe Cleary, Steve Paterson, Dave Stevenson, the department was not available for the photograph.



PORT TO HEAD



Top: Alan Waring (Prenton) runs a diagnostic check. Above: Again at Prenton, John Moore uses the new 4 Post lift.

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In the NVP Section at Lister Drive, Frank Hudson puts the finishing touches to a new Vauxhall Combo.



GREEN ISSUES



Electrician Peter Ambrose fitting the new luminaires at Head Office..

Staff shed light on new scheme

IN the October issue of *Contact*, mention was made of the new lighting scheme which was just about to commence. At Head Office, the room occupied by the Property Services Department and the Legal Department - Room 5S1 - has now been completely refurbished with the new lighting scheme.

Before the work started and at the completion, the views of the staff WERE sought. A fact sheet was given to each member of staff in 5S1 telling them:

- the lighting scheme was to be completed during business hours
- the luminaires would operate using both presence and ambient light detector, saving energy when no one was at his or her desk and also reducing the lighting level when the external lighting level was bright enough
- the energy savings in terms of cost and CO2 reduction.

With the completion of the office lighting and wanting to ensure that staff were pleased with the new scheme, Ben Foster, Principal Engineer in Architectural and Building, asked the staff in 5S1 to return a simple questionnaire asking a number of questions:

- was the lighting better, worse or the same?
- were the automatic controls liked?
- was there less glare on the screens of VDUs and PCs?

The response rate to the questionnaires was 68 per cent. The replies showed that staff overwhelmingly liked the new lighting and the automatic controls.

They like the new lighting and the automatic controls

Electricity meter readings taken both before and after the completion of the lighting scheme show that we are well on the way to achieving the 60 per cent energy savings predicted by Thorn Lighting.

The lighting refurbishment will continue with Room 4S1 in April. The reduction in lighting load of 270kW will go a long way to making Head Office energy efficient and we should begin to see the graph shown on this page reducing in level.

GAS FROM A HOME SUPPLY

Reports by
Geoff Ravenscroft
Energy and Environmental Manager

THE Energy and Environment section now has a Monitoring and Targeting (M&T) data base which stores the accounting details from the invoices submitted for electricity, water and gas utilities.

Gas, you say. Well yes, because we use gas at three of our buildings, at the Customer Services Centre at Southport, and at Warrington Superstore and also at the Revenue Protection Unit. Warrington Superstore uses gas in excess of 2,500 therms per annum and so we were able to purchase gas other than from British Gas. So for the first time we were able to transfer to the use of gas supplied from our own company, Manweb Gas.

say that almost every office and depot shows a reduction in energy use, and some show energy reductions as large as 25 per cent. The Board also receives regular statements on the effectiveness of energy management.

Reduction

At the ten month stage - 1 April 1993 to 31 January 1994 - there has been a nine per cent electricity reduction over the same period in the previous financial year. This represents a cost saving of £90,000 (and a reduction of 1,800 tonnes of CO2 gas) from our energy bill of £1.4 million.

Added to the £60,000 for the whole of the previous year, this means we have now saved £150,000 (3,000 tonnes of CO2 gas) since our energy saving campaign began on 1 April 1992. The graph shows the current position in the Company.

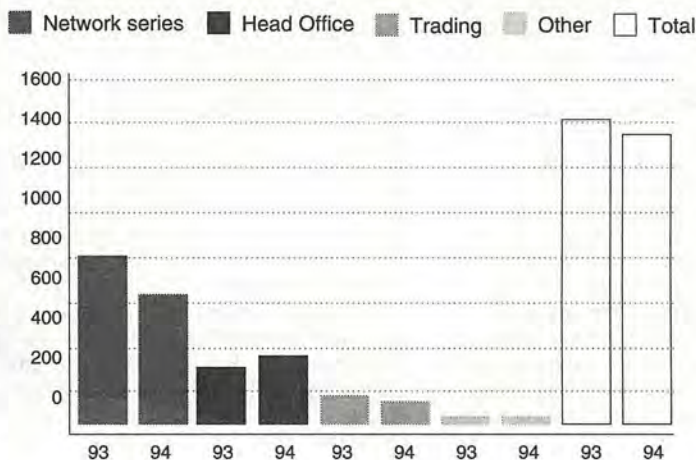
But the savings are even greater when the effects of weather are compensated for. Weather compensation involves the use of degree days which are a measure of how much and for how long the outside temperature is below a control temperature which, for heating purposes in commercial premises, is regarded as being 15.5 deg C. Colder weather increases the number of degree days and compensating for them over different periods of time is essential if comparisons of true energy savings are to take place. Allowing for the effects of weather, there was a saving of £180,000 in the 10 months of this year. This is a reduction of 12 per cent in energy costs over the same period last year.

Everyone should feel pleased at these excellent results, thanks being due in no small measure to the 90 people throughout the Company whose effects on reducing our energy consumption are now showing through in real cost savings. Our effect on global warming is also being reduced by our efforts in reducing our emission of CO2 gas.

Achievement

The M&T data base now holds some half million individual accounts dating from 1 April 1991. Since November 1993, the section has been sending out league tables of achievements to Energy Managers, District Managers and the Director, Network Services. I'm pleased to

Ten month energy comparison



Restored to green glory

NORTH Wirral District teamed up with householders from the Poulton area to help restore their once 'green' neighbourhood to its former glory.

District Manager Phil Ramsey is pictured (2nd from left) helping to plant one of the mature trees donated to Poulton Community Association by Manweb.

He said: "Poulton was once well known for its trees, and we are delighted to help restore the area. The aim of this project is to improve the environment for local people as well as provide long-term habitats for wildlife."

Also pictured are youngster James Morrissey, of Poulton Road, Martin Page, Wirral Borough Council's Tree Officer, and Tom Abernethy, Chairman of Poulton Community Association.

SAFETY SCENE

HOWARD KIRKHAM, Director Network Services, explains his Division's commitment to Health and Safety.

Why we needed to take action

EARLY in 1993, a decision was made at the Manweb Executive Committee that the responsibility for the management of Health and Safety activities within Network Services would be significantly strengthened. I was very much in favour of this move and was pleased with this decision.

The best way for Health and Safety performance to be improved is for line management to take full responsibility for this important issue and to make sure the right actions are taken at all levels within the Division.

It quickly became clear to me that there was a need to improve our management approach to Health and Safety within Network Services. In comparing our performance with other regional electricity companies there was little doubt that we needed to make real improvements. It was not just sufficient to talk about the need for improving safety - we needed to take action.

Implement

My personal commitment to this task could only be converted into results by implementing a number of key actions.

The first of these was the appointment of Steve Wood as Health and Safety Manager for Network Services. This appointment was made in July 1993 and has proved to be very successful. Steve has a very appropriate background for this job. As District Manager in Gwynedd, he was actively involved - in a hands-on way - in improving accident performance in Gwynedd. He is therefore very capable of exerting a major influence throughout all parts of Network Services in our drive to im-



Howard Kirkham

prove Health and Safety. He is also working very closely with Peter Burke and his team in Corporate Health and Safety.

This commitment to an improvement in Health and Safety is now being seen widely across Network Services. We are already beginning to see some improvement in safety performance - including a reduction in accidents - due to the increasing efforts of many people within Network Services.

Currently

The following feature explains the many initiatives that are currently being taken throughout Network Services. In future issues of Contact we'll be looking at what's happening in some of the districts.

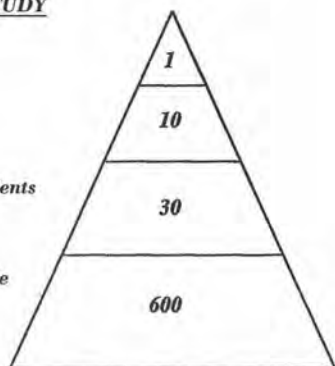
ACCIDENT RATIO STUDY

serious injury

minor injury

property damage incidents

incidents with no visible injury or damage (near misses)



Meet the Network Services Health and Safety team. Steve Wood, Health and Safety Manager, is pictured (front, seated) with (l to r) Safety Adviser Carolyn McKay, Project Manager John Ford, Operational Safety Manager Haydn Evans, and Project Managers Robin Bradshaw and Nick Johnson. Robin is on secondment from Mid Mersey and Nick has been seconded from North Wirral. Missing from the photo is Maria McCusker, who provides Admin Support for the Department.

EVERYONE WINS WITH SAFER WORKING

"ACCIDENTS and ill-health caused by work cost Britain £11 to £16 billion each year. At company level, these costs typically represent five to 10 per cent of annual profits. At the level of the individual, this translates into pain, suffering, reduced morale, job performance and quality of life."

That's the bleak picture painted by Frank J. Davies, Chairman of the Health and Safety Commission, to hammer home the true cost of accidents in the workplace.

"We've traditionally measured the cost of accidents and ill-health at Manweb in terms of time lost, but the real figure for all companies - according to Frank Davies - is really much higher," said Steve Wood, Health and Safety Manager for Network Services.

"When you add on all the other costs - for example investigating the cause of an accident, repairing damage or paying compensation - it is quite startling. And that's without taking into account all the pain and suffering that goes with an accident or ill-health."

"Cracking the problem of accidents and ill-health caused by work has real benefits. Everybody wins from safer working at Manweb - employees, customers and the Company itself."

With this ultimate goal, Network Services has identified a number of key actions to improve Manweb's safety record.

- Safety is the number one item on the District Manager/Director's quarterly business review agenda.
- A divisional safety action plan has been developed.
- Each Manweb district has also produced its own local plan.
- International Safety Rating System (ISRS) audits have been carried out in each district.
- The audit results are used to benchmark areas for improvements.

ISRS is an internationally recognised safety and loss control management system. The ISRS audits were launched at Manweb in July 1993 in Mid Cheshire District, and since then all districts plus the Central Field Unit have received their ratings.

Under this system, 20 key elements are audited, including Leadership and Administration, Plan Inspections, Accident/Incident Investigation, Organisational Rules, Personal Protective Equipment and Health Control. Liverpool and Mid Mersey are the top scorers, leading the pack at Level Five, and Gwynedd and North Mersey have

achieved Level Four. Aberystwyth has just gained Level Three and most of the other districts have been rated Level Two or Level One.

"More importantly, a plan, tailored to each district's own needs, is produced to help improve performance in a structured manner," said Steve Wood.

Commitment

He added: "A very important part of improving safety management is to gain the commitment of the line management team. Supervisors, foremen, engineers and managers all have a vital role to play, and ISRS provides a focus for this commitment."

"In addition, group meetings within Network Services are considered to be very important, and the interchange of ideas generated at these gatherings are invaluable for joint problem-solving and raising awareness of safety matters," said Steve.

ISRS is one of a number of projects being carried out by Steve and his team with the ultimate goal of improving safety within Network Services.

- Other projects include:
- Legal compliance check.
 - Risk assessment.

- Manual handling assessments.
- Workstation assessments.
- Management safety training.
- Management of contractors.
- Crisis Management.

These projects are all aimed at improving our safety performance.

Research has shown a relationship between serious accidents (time-lost) and near misses as shown by the accident ratio triangle (illustrated).

For every serious or major injury there are 10 minor injuries, 30 property damage incidents and 600 incidents where there is no visible injury or damage (near misses).

Chance is the only difference between a near miss and a serious injury.

A real example of this was an incident involving a Manweb team erecting a new service pole.

During excavation the 'old' pole heeled over, pulling down the stone chimney to which it was attached. Part of the chimney crashed through the roof of the house - which fortunately was unoccupied at the time - and part fell into the garden next door, damaging a patio.

"It could have been fatal if someone had been in the

way of the falling masonry," said Steve. "As it was, the cost was simply a loss to Manweb."

"Although the team didn't set out to have an accident, it was only chance that prevented things turning out worse than they actually did!"

For every £1 lost in terms of time off work as a result of a major accident, the Government's Health and Safety Executive estimates the true losses are between £8 and £36, depending on the type of industry. These startling figures emerged from a HSE study of five industries, backing up the comments by Frank J. Davies.

Illustrate

Steve Wood said: "These figures were compiled for different industries than ours and therefore the absolute figures may not apply. Nevertheless, they illustrate that the true cost of accidents can be significantly higher than appears at face value."

He added: "Managing safety is very much a team effort. Each employee has a role to play and, in particular, district management teams and safety co-ordinators are showing results from their efforts."

OBITUARIES

IT is with sadness that Contact reports the deaths of the following retired Manweb employees.

Edith Ross, 88, died on February 2. She was a Clerk in Sub Area 3 before retiring in 1962.

William Henry Banks worked in the DRC at Liverpool before retiring in 1991. He died on 7 February aged 66.

Emlyn Williams, 83, who died on 13 February, was a Chargehand at Legacy before retiring in 1971.

Howell Edmunds Blackwell died on 14 February, aged 90. He was a Labourer in Area 4 before retiring in 1968.

Frederick Francis Clynch, 71, who was a Driver in North Wirral before retiring in 1987, died on 15 February.

Harry Hope, 87, who died on 16 February, was a Labourer in Crewe before retiring in 1971.

Hywel Price, 87, who was a Senior Revenue Assistant in Area 4 before retirement in 1969, died on 16 February.

Frank Pemberton, who died on 17 February aged 85, retired in 1973 at South Lincs, where he was a Senior Clerical Assistant.

William Arthur Davies, 64, an Overhead Linesman at Oswestry until retirement in 1985, died on 19 February.

Alexander MacDonald, 91, who died on 21 February, was an Installation Inspector in Liverpool before retiring in 1963.

Sidney Lowry, 72, a Clerical Assistant in Liverpool until retirement in 1986, died on 26 February.

Robert Allen, who died on 25 February aged 79, was a Foreman in North Mersey until retiring in 1979.

□ We regret that in previous editions of Contact we omitted an obituary notice for North Wirral Jointer's Mate Tony Robinson, who died on 6 July,

PAL WANTS YOUR HELP

A NEW charity has been set up within the UK power industry to transport aid, initially to Bosnia and later to other European destinations, where it is urgently needed.

The charity, Power Aid Logistics, has Lord Wakeham as its patron, and trustees include: Roger Farrance, former chairman of the Electricity Association; Dr R H Hawley, chief executive Nuclear Electric; Tony Cooper, general secretary of the Engineers' and Managers' Association (EMA); and John Monks of the TUC.

The charity's first convoy was officially despatched from the Houses of Parliament on Monday, 17 January, by Lord Wakeham. The convoy, comprising four articulated trucks was carrying £60,000 of aid for the charity Feed the Children, to Split in Croatia. From there, Feed the Children volunteers distributed the aid to the parts of Bosnia where it was most needed. Volunteer HGV drivers from several electricity companies drove trucks, many of them taking part of their annual leave to make the journey.

Power Aid Logistics (PAL) was established following an initiative by Tony Cooper early last year. When Tony announced he was intending to take an aid convoy into the former Yugoslavia, he generated tremendous support from the electricity industry, other companies in which EMA has members and British Coal. As a result, five convoys carried 400 tonnes of aid to Bosnia last year. One consequence of these trips was that electricity companies in Bosnia and Croatia requested help from their UK counterparts in supplying much-needed parts and equipment to repair their networks. Sufficient funds were collected in November to send two further lorries to Split carrying both aid and electrical equipment.

Building on experience, Power Aid Logistics has managed to reduce the cost of the return journey per vehicle to £1,500-£2,000. It costs Feed the Children around £3,000 to send their own lorry to Split so, for each lorry sent by PAL, an additional £1,500 is saved to buy food. PAL has applied for an Overseas Development Agency grant to help fund around 25 to 30 initial return journeys and purchase containers and handling

equipment.

David Grubb, of Feed the Children, said: "This initiative is brilliant news for Feed the Children. Our organisation can guarantee to ensure that our aid gets through and we often reach areas that other relief agencies cannot get to. This is because it is well known that we carry baby food, and no-one wants babies to suffer, so our lorries are allowed through when the bigger convoys are held up."

Regular donations are needed to ensure convoys can continue to be sent to the countries relying on foreign aid for survival. Most of the electricity companies have been very generous, but individual employees can also contribute via a Give As You Earn scheme. Give As You Earn is a simple and tax-efficient method for employees to make charitable donations, whilst also providing a regular flow of income, which is so vital to enable charities to plan and fund their operations.

Employees decide how much they want to give. Each payday the employer will deduct this sum before income tax is calculated, so it's tax free. For example, if a basic-rate taxpayer makes a donation of £10, the net cost to the employee will be only £7.50, whilst the charity receives the full £10. The cost to higher rate taxpayers will be even less. Give As You Earn does make a small charge but this is paid by Manweb. You can give all your contributions to one charity or share it amongst several, up to a maximum of £900 in the current tax year. You can, of course, change your mind at any time about the charities that you want to support and you can increase or decrease the amount that you give when it suits you. If you are able to give £10 or more each month you can also have your own Personal Charity account and a 'Charity Cheque Book' with which to make donations.

PAL also needs more HGV drivers and would be delighted to hear from any present, or former, electricity industry employees who possess an HGV licence and can spare six days to make the return trip. PAL can be contacted on 0932 564131.

If you would like to make a regular donation to Give As You Earn, please fill in the form below:

Please complete in block capitals and send this form to:
Payroll Section,
5E1,
Head Office.

Please deduct each payday (tick one):

Monthly paid only

£75 £50 £25 £10

I prefer to give £
(State any amount up to £75)

I would like the amount above to go to:

Name of charity:

POWER AID LOGISTICS

Flaxman House,
Gogmore Lane,
Chertsey, Surrey KT16 9JS.

DECLARATION: I confirm that my total gifts to charity through payroll giving will not exceed the statutory limit (£900 in 1994/5) in any tax year and will not be used in payment of a covenant.

Full name:

Address:

.....Postcode

Employer's name (in full):
Manweb plc, Sealand Road, Chester CH1 4LR.

Employee staff number:

Signature:

Date:

Note to employer - Please check the employee/staff number corresponds with your records. Send one copy of form to Give As You Earn. Tick here if you are NOT contracted to offer Give As You Earn.

Note to charities - If you receive this form, please send to Give As You Earn ticking this box if it has NOT been sent to you from an employer.

MOTURING



CAR TESTED:

Ford Mondeo 1.8 LX 5dr hatch.
Price: £12,445

By
Jon Tracy

FORD'S Mondeo was launched only a year ago, but consistently tops the bestseller charts month after month - as expected. Some cynics argue that if Ford launched a motorised dustbin it would sell well in Britain, as can be seen from the sales performance of the rather mediocre Escort. So, has the Mondeo really earned its position at the top?

The Mondeo certainly has an extensive range, with prices starting at £11,495 for the 1.6 and rising to £18,920 for the top of the range Ghia. You can choose from a four-door saloon, five-door hatch or Estate - and don't forget, would you like a 1.6, 1.8 or 2.0 litre 16-valve engine to go with that? All in all there are a mind-boggling 30 different combinations of engine, trim level and body style available.

The interior of the Mondeo is well constructed and had a light and airy feel, thanks to a large glass area. I found the main controls had a nice positive action and came easily to hand, with the indicators and wipers reached by merely extending your fingers from the steering wheel. There is plenty of passenger space, with three adults seated in the back in relative comfort.



VERDICT:

Safe, spacious, and secure, with excellent ride and performance, the Mondeo is not only a class leader, but one of Ford's best-ever cars.

Contact rating: ★★★★★

Performance Table	1.8LX
Max speed	122mph
0-60	10.2 seconds
Fuel economy	52.3mpg/56mph

The Best of the Rest

Citroen Xantia 1.8i LX - £12,240.
Well built and with excellent ride, is right up with the Mondeo.
Watch for potential depreciation if you buy privately. ★★★★★

Peugeot 405 GL 1.8i - £11,940.

Performance and handling are top-notch, but beginning to show its age.
★★★★☆

Vauxhall Cavalier 1.8i GLS - £12,860.

Well equipped repmobile, now outclassed by Mondeo and Xantia.
★★★★☆

CORPORATE COMMITMENT EXPLAINED

CHIEF Executive John Roberts joined 'Tomorrow's World' presenter Judith Hann who was presenting 'Climate Change - the challenge and opportunities'.

This Manweb-supported Energy Efficiency Office road show was staged at the Moat House International, Chester, in February. Mr Roberts spoke on how Manweb is Making a Corporate Commitment and reducing its own internal energy consumption. The audience of over 200 was also interested in the Holyhead Power Save Project and was surprised to learn that Manweb was keen to reduce demand rather than increase it," said David Walker, Manweb Research and Technical Support Manager who, with Geoff Ravenscroft, Energy and Environment Manager, helped to stage the event. Mr Roberts was joined by the Earl of Arran, Private Secretary of State for the Environment and senior executives from various industries in this event.



A question of energy

AN illuminating presentation on energy efficiency, delivered by Manweb Research and Technical Support Manager Dr David Walker, brought praise from the audience - Colwyn and Aberconwy Friends of the Earth.

Staging their meeting in Llandudno for the first time the 'Friends' heard David talk of Manweb's commitment to energy efficiency. Illustrated with slides and pamphlets, the talk provoked much discussion, including that on the Holyhead Power Save Demand Side Management Project.

It also left David with a question to answer later.

In his follow-up letter of thanks the 'Friends' Acting Co-ordinator John Rice asked David to explain if the saving by switching lights and appliances off is negated if they are switched on and off frequently over a short period of time.

David replied by sending Mr Rice a note referring to fluorescent lighting and short switch-off periods, which explained why the rule 'Don't switch off fluorescent lighting if you leave the room for less than 60 minutes' is no longer valid.

Returning to the presentation, Mr Rice thanked David for coming to Llandudno and said: "I hope that the example of Manweb in setting out an environmental policy will be followed by the other electricity companies."



Customer FOCUS

MY MUM had no electricity recently and I phoned Manweb. I was told very politely that there was a major problem and that I should take my Mum home to my house in Bootle. I would be kept informed what was happening.

This man was very helpful, phoned me back several times and kept me in touch.

I would like to thank Manweb and their staff for being so thoughtful when I was so worried about the situation.

They were really kind and when the electricity came back on, they phoned and said that I could take my Mum home.

I don't know who this man was but he was lovely and I do thank him.

Ada McNally,
Netherton

N. MERSEY EARN THE AWARDS

LONG service awards were presented to North Mersey staff by District Manager Mike Jones. Here he is seen handing a 30 year service certificate to John Ashton, watched by Martin Davies (30), Vinny Sullivan (30), Chris Kavanagh (30), Charlie Warbis (30), James Creighton (30), Miles Stevenson (30), Roy Palin (20), Danny Devlin (30), Keith Hornby (20), John Appleton (30) and Ken Hughes (20).

HOLIDAYS

Llandudno. Rosaire Hotel, St Seiriols Rd, family run with excellent home cooking, separate tables. All double and twin rooms en-suite with colour TV, tea-making facilities and free parking. £15.00 B&B with 4-course dinner optional at £5.00. Some single rooms available. Central to all amenities and on level ground. Book now for Easter, a short break or your summer holiday. For further details please ring Mrs W. G. Evans on 0492-877677.

Caravan To Let. Sea view position. Sunnysands Caravan Park, Talybont, Barmouth. Static caravan (21ft). Two bedrooms, one with double bed and one with two bunks. Shower/hand basin and toilet. Full size cooker, mains electricity and water. This compact caravan will sleep 4 comfortably but does have the facility for 6 people with the main caravan area having sleeping facilities for 2 people. There are all amenities on site including a licensed social club. Reasonable rates. For further information please telephone Mrs McCormick on Wrexham (0978) 750041.

Costa Del Sol, Benalmadena. Why not get away for a few weeks in the sun? Studio apartment available from 19 March onwards. Suitable two persons. Help with flights and insurance if needed. Beautiful site, close to beach, bars and all amenities, but not noisy. Cable TV, 24 hours reception, pool and gardens. For further details ring Bette Flanagan on 0244 341097.

Disney - Florida. Large 3 and 4 bedroom luxury villas on Loma Vista/Linda. All with own private pools. Only 15 mins from Disney. For brochure phone 0691 650123.

Borderlands of Cumbria and Scotland. Cosy cottage retreat on Kirklington smallholding.

SUPPORT FOR WORKOUT

MANWEB customer service centres are showing their support for "the world's largest workout".

Posters and leaflets are being distributed in the Company's 61 retail outlets to encourage people to join the Flora Aerobathon '94.

The event, being staged at venues in big cities around the country on Sunday, 24 April, is set to raise substantial amounts of money for heart research.

Individuals, company teams or super teams (of 15 persons) can enter. Forms can be obtained at Manweb shops and superstores or through Alex Lewis, Retail Administration Manager, Retail Operations, at Head Office, Ext. 2904.

FREE ADS

VEHICLES

Sleeps 4. Fully inclusive. Open all year. Short breaks. Excellent touring base - Northumberland, Hadrian's Wall, Lakes. No pets. Brochure Tel. 0228 75650.

Too Good To Be True! How would you like your own apartment on the Costa Del Sol for life from £450 to £1,050 (per week) one off payment or £50 deposit and from £2.00 per week for 7 years. I have had a timeshare with this company for eight years and can fully recommend them for value for money and reliability. For further details contact Brian Thomas, MCS Ltd, Abergele, on 0745 822333, or Home 0492 580604. It will cost nothing to look and no salesman will call on you.

Sattilo Alto, Costa Del Sol. Studio apartments to let from £50 per week. The studio apartments are fully equipped, en-suite bathroom and shower, and the balconies overlook the extensive private gardens with two large pools, kiddies' pool, pool bar, football table, pool table, tennis court and sun beds. Also a lounge bar with entertainment most nights. For further details phone Brian Thomas, Home 0492 580604, Office 0745 822333 or internal Clwyd 2018.

Caravan (modern), 31ft 6/7 berth, sited on Haven's award-winning park at Towyn, North Wales. All mains services, gas and electric, free. Fully equipped, including TV. Free family entertainment, heated indoor swimming pool, children's Tiger Club. All amenities on site. Sorry, no pets. Big savings on Haven's brochure price for Manweb employees and their families. Tel. 0244 372860.

1985 Suzuki Jeep, model SJ410 Estate. Metallic blue. 38,000 miles from new. All extras fitted. Taxed and Tested. Price £2,450 ono. Tel. Nantwich 0270 624128 after 6pm.

PERSONAL

Professional Waxing. Discount for Manweb staff. Contact G. Smith, Tel. Head Office 2691.

Fly Fishing. A small fly fishing club which fishes on an upland reservoir in pleasant surroundings in the Wrexham area has a few vacancies. For details and application form please Tel. (0978) 363379 after 6pm.

LEISURE

Canal Cruise - Come and enjoy a meal with a difference. Eat and drink whilst cruising aboard the Judith Mary for two to three hours on the Shropshire Union Canal, from Chester Canal Basin. Party sizes 20-40. Full bar, taped music, will appeal to clubs and societies, school trips, etc. Contact Pat and Keith Sowden, 0244 383887.

WANTED

Any Manchester City memorabilia of their victorious years. Will give good money for pristine articles. Contact Peter Williams, Northenden, 64983.

PLEASE PRINT YOUR FREE AD. ON THIS COUPON OR ON PLAIN PAPER. IF THE ADVERT IS TO RUN FOR MORE THAN ONE MONTH, PLEASE SUBMIT ANOTHER COUPON.

(BLOCK CAPITALS, PLEASE)

.....

 Name

Work place (or retired)
 Tel:

Send to: 'CONTACT' FREE ADS, MANWEB,
 SEALAND ROAD, CHESTER CH1 4LR

STEVE SPRINGS TO THEIR DEFENCE

A 'PROTECTION racket' running in Head Office Restaurant is proving very popular with many female staff.

But this is no shady deal - it's an attempt to teach the ladies to look after themselves in the event of an assault.

It's the brainchild of Steve Gauller who is running a four week self defence course based on techniques from the Korean martial art of taekwon-do.

Steve, a meter security technician from the Revenue Protection Unit is a 1st Kup student at the art.

"The course is based on a small part of taekwon-do," says Steve. "There won't be any

punching or kicking, but just techniques for 'calming' situations and releasing from physical attack.

"I developed the idea after my wife told me of a talk she attended about self defence."

At the end of the first course there will be a talk on safety and awareness by Cheshire Police Crime Prevention Panel, who have endorsed Steve's sessions.

Jane Meyer and Susan Tudor from Dee Valley - just two of the 20 ladies on the course - both said they enjoyed it. "It's good fun but gives us confidence in case we have to deal with an assault situation," said Jane.

If there is sufficient interest Steve says he will

Above: The group gives Steve a dose of his own medicine. Right: Wendy Ellison and Sarah Willacy demonstrate technique.

run another course. Anyone interested should contact Sue Linton, Recreation Club Secretary, on Head Office ext 2538.

There will be no charge for the course, which will be held in the Head Office Restaurant between 4.30pm and 6.30pm on Wednesdays.



Helping to generate Dee Valley's service strategy are (l to r) Martin Jolley, Overhead Linesman; Jason Morgan, Refurbishment Engineer; Andy Wilcox, Overhead Linesman; Alan Hughes, Operations Foreman; Liz Maddocks, Clerk; Phil Jones, Supervisor; David Lloyd, Driver; Coral Morris, Clerk; Claire Oliver, Clerk; and Arlen Singh, Operations Engineer.

STRATEGY IN PLACE

GENERATING a service strategy was the theme of two one-day seminars for Wrexham Section Dee Valley District staff.

Held at Llyndir Hall, Rossett, the seminars encouraged input from the group which included engineers, supervisors, field and support staff.

"The input had to be from the people who know the problem and how to implement changes," said Customer Services Facilitator Angela Meredith.

The service strategies which evolved from the seminars will be combined into an overall strategy to provide and maintain a reliable electricity supply with minimum interruptions, to all existing and potential customers.

Project Manager Neil Goulden said that with a service strategy in place his whole team is shooting for the same goal.

The District aims to be perceived as a knowledgeable, responsible and well-trained team committed to the exceptional care of its customers.

"The next step is to put this into practice," said Angela. All the staff feel that the strategy statement is the basis for improvement and they are committed to achieving it."

Lighting up!



MANWEB Contracting Services Ltd made light work of improving security at the Hospice Shop in St Helens.

MCSL donated and installed an auto sensor security light at the back of the town centre premises, making the rear entrance safer for the shop's volunteer staff who previously had to cross an unlit car park.

Manweb's Director Trading and MCSL Chairman Peter Hopkins popped in to check the progress of the new security lighting and is pictured up the ladder making the final adjustments.

Also pictured is Lady Kirsty Pilkington, the Hospice Shop's chief fund-raiser, and Manweb Electricians David Goadsby and Lee Gregory, who installed the lighting.

Peter Hopkins, who later lent a hand behind the counter, said: "We are delighted to help the Hospice Shop, which is one of a series of fund-raising ventures to raise £1.6 million for a new Hospice in the St Helens area."