

The Hong Kong and China Gas Company Limited (Towngas) is today a piped-gas supplier serving more than 1.3 million residential, commercial and industrial customers in Hong Kong. With a piped distribution network of more than 2,630 kilometers, Towngas is available to 85 per cent of Hong Kong households.

1999 was a great year for Towngas as they received several quality and management related awards as follows,

- “Company of the Year Award”
from UK-based Institution of Gas Engineers
- “1999 HKMA Quality Award”
from the Hong Kong Management Association
- ISO 14001 certification
- “Good People Management Award”
from the labor department of the Hong Kong SAR Government.

Also in 1999, The Hong Kong and China Gas Company Limited selected Elster-Kromschöder and Jeavons as their main supplier for 70,000 units of BK-G4 residential meters and 75,000 units of J42 governors breaking away from their traditional suppliers, Schlumberger and Bryan Donkin.

We recently visited the company in August and spoke with Mr. James Y.C. Kwan, Director and General Manager, and also the President of the Institute of Gas Engineers UK, on the following ...



James Y. C. Kwan (left) with Philip Lam, Regional Sales Director of ELSTER-AMCO Asia

What was the reason for Towngas' selection of ELSTER-AMCO as their supplier for residential gas meters and governors?

Quality has always been our top priority for new and existing suppliers to Towngas. As such, we will normally visit the factory of the suppliers in order to have a fair assessment of its quality. In this case, we visited the Elster-Kromschöder and Jeavons factories to observe the manufacturing processes and shopfloor activities in order to be comfortable with the quality. In addition, we subject samples to thorough quality checks before acceptance of your meters and governors.

As it turned out, your quality, technology of the meters and competitive pricing were the main reasons for our selection.

How would you describe the quality of Elster's BK-G4 meter and Jeavons J42 governors?

As mentioned above, quality is our top priority, which is why we visited the Elster and Jeavons factories to be very sure that we are buying quality products.

Your performance for the first seven deliveries of meters and governors was excellent as none of the meters or regulators were rejected due to defective quality. We were positively surprised by the quality of your products especially since you are a new supplier.

Where have these (BK-G4 & J42) been installed in Hong Kong?

Most of these meters and governors are installed in the residential high-rise buildings and houses which are covered by our residential group.

Interview with The Hong Kong and China Gas Company Limited

How would you describe the ELSTER-AMCO group from your business dealings with them so far? Are you satisfied with our level of service?

We are very happy with the support given by the ELSTER-AMCO group which has been responsive and supportive to our needs. We hope to have continued conversation with the ELSTER-AMCO group so that the two parties can understand each other and continue with the relationship. We are definitely satisfied with the level of service, especially from your organization in Asia.

Do you see any possible business co-operation with the ELSTER-AMCO group in the future especially on Towngas' self-developed AMR system?

We would certainly like to do so. We should keep our mind open and see where the co-operation can be. We did receive some enquiries from the Nice show and are seriously looking for partners.

Would you be able to tell us more on your AMR systems?

The densely-populated environment of Hong Kong renders relatively low meter reading costs. The challenge of introducing AMR does not come from the technologies which already exist, it comes from how to apply the technologies to reduce its costs so that it can be comparable to the already inexpensive manual meter reading costs in Hong Kong.

To ensure the AMR system is cost-effective in design, we take advantages of different technologies and divide our own system into three distinct data transmission modes utilizing RF transmission, signal cable and telephone line. The combination of these technologies together with the unique utilization of RF transmission along metallic gas piping skillfully overcomes the environmental constraints on RF transmission at high rise buildings. It significantly keeps wiring requirements to a minimum hence lowering the installation cost and providing a backbone for a cost-effective and reliable AMR system.

We will be discussing applications of new Technology at the forthcoming "World of Gas" conference to be held in Hong Kong from Nov. 16 – 17 organized by the Institution of Gas Engineers of which I am the Chairman and would cordially invite the ELSTER-AMCO group to participate in this conference as it is a golden opportunity for local and overseas delegates to share their experiences and visions.

Thank you for the interview!

PHILIP LAM, ELSTER-AMCO SINGAPORE



James Y. C. Kwan, Director and General Manager of Towngas