



ADS turns recycled plastic into sustainable infrastructure

Business needs

Reliable, secure networking
for 100+ facilities worldwide

Networking solution

AT&T Business Fiber®
AT&T Dedicated InternetSM
AT&T SASESM
AT&T Business wireless

Business value

Leading manufacturer of
innovative stormwater and
onsite wastewater solutions

Industry focus

Manufacturing

Size

5,000+ people serving markets
in the U.S., Canada, and beyond

About Advanced Drainage Systems, Inc. (ADS)

Headquartered in Hilliard, Ohio, Advanced Drainage Systems is a leading manufacturer of innovative stormwater and onsite wastewater solutions. The company's water management solutions address one essential challenge: how to move water through the landscape—from the moment a raindrop falls to the moment it's treated and returned to the system.

The situation

ADS needed reliable, business-grade connectivity across its global enterprise, from its advanced research-and-development center to remote, open-air storage and staging areas.

Solution

AT&T SD-WAN with both fiber and wireless connectivity ensure secure, high-speed, dedicated connectivity with backup everywhere they operate.

Advanced Drainage Systems, Inc. (ADS) is a \$3 billion water management company that specializes in making corrugated plastic pipe and other water management products. Operating more than 100 facilities globally with 14 billion feet of installed pipe, they're a leader in environmental sustainability.

One reason is what they do. ADS has built their mission around the lifecycle of a raindrop. Their high-density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe and other solutions are designed to capture, convey, store, and treat one of the world's most precious resources: water. For ADS, water is the very reason they exist.

They're also a sustainability leader because of how they do it. ADS recycles 500 million pounds of plastic each year. That plastic becomes durable pipe and related products installed in drainage systems and designed to last over a century.

"We consume 30% of the recycled pigmented HDPE bottles in the U.S.—like laundry detergent and milk containers," explains Chief Information Officer James Kline. "We shred, clean, and process them through six recycling plants across the nation, converting them into plastic flakes."

So it makes sense when Kline says, "We don't need to craft a sustainability story. Sustainability is who we are."

Municipalities and industries worldwide use ADS plastic piping systems for roadways, highways, and housing developments. Compared with traditional materials, corrugated plastic can offer installation advantages. Its lighter weight makes it easier to transport, handle, and install on many job sites.

"These products are designed for long-term performance," says Kline. "They're built to serve critical water management needs for decades."

Wanted: A network to support growth

Several strategic acquisitions over the past five years and the opening of its Engineering and Technology Center in Hilliard, Ohio, in 2024 point to one certainty: ADS has big plans for growth and innovation. But eight years ago, this sustainability leader faced a problem that threatened its plan. Its network wasn't up for the challenge.

"When I joined ADS, we didn't know what sites were up or down," recalls Kline. "There was a time when a site went down for days and no one even knew about it."

For a global manufacturer like ADS, network blindness isn't just an inconvenience. It's a business liability.

Geography without visibility

ADS operates manufacturing plants and distribution centers across a wide range of landscapes. Some facilities sit in urban centers with reliable connectivity options. Others occupy sprawling laydown yards in hard-to-reach areas where traditional network solutions fall short. ADS needed a connectivity strategy flexible enough to serve everywhere they operate.



"AT&T was easy to work with. The account team and service providers were there every step of the way. When my wireless and wireline people come to me with that feedback, it makes decisions easy."

James Kline
Chief Information Officer
Advanced Drainage Systems, Inc.



What's a laydown yard?

It's a secure outdoor storage area that holds materials, tools, and heavy equipment for construction projects. It serves as a staging area near a job site that provides easy access to inventory. Laydown yards can be dusty places. They're often in areas with few connectivity options. That's why ADS uses reliable AT&T Business wireless. It keeps workers connected in challenging environments.

The company was running on traditional MPLS (multiprotocol label switching) connections. MPLS is fast and reliable. It enabled IT teams to give certain traffic, such as voice and video, priority in the network. But it requires dedicated, physical hardware infrastructure. That makes it expensive and not very flexible. The network also lacked visibility. Performance monitoring was reactive rather than proactive. When sites went offline, IT teams discovered it only when customers or plant managers complained. Compared to a software-defined wide area network (SD-WAN), MPLS wasn't a good fit with the company's rapid growth.

"We needed connectivity solutions wherever we were," Kline explains. "Not just in major cities, but everywhere our business takes us."

Trust in a known quantity

When Kline joined ADS eight years ago, the company was using AT&T wireless for company-issued cellphones. His experience at other companies, including Fortune Brands, showed him that AT&T was reliable, consistent, and responsive to customer needs.

"My past experience with AT&T showed me they were dependable," he says. "So when we decided to refresh our entire network, AT&T Business was at the top of the list."

The company started with fiber internet, specifically AT&T Dedicated Internet. Soon after, they replaced MPLS circuits in their network with a more flexible solution: AT&T SASE. The results were immediate.

What impressed Kline most wasn't just the technology. It was the partnership.

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Innovation at home

Today, ADS runs a sophisticated connectivity infrastructure across all its facilities. Primary circuits from AT&T support every location. Secondary and tertiary circuits, including wireless, provide connectivity in hard-to-reach places along with redundancy.

AT&T SASE security sits on top of it all. AT&T SD-WAN makes the network flexible. IT teams can monitor and manage sites through a portal while secure access is managed in the cloud. Together, they create a secure access service edge (SASE) environment that's agile and flexible while securing every endpoint—whether the “edges” are sites, remote users, or devices. In addition, ADS contracts with AT&T spin-off LevelBlue for virtual Chief Information Security Officer (vCISO) services.

The transformation was dramatic.



“Regardless of where our plants and facilities are located, AT&T has been able to provide connectivity.”

James Kline
Chief Information Officer
Advanced Drainage Systems, Inc.

“Between AT&T and our SD-WAN solution, the problems of connectivity just don’t exist anymore,” Kline says. “We don’t have true outages anymore unless there’s a single point of failure in backhaul,” Kline explains. (Backhaul is the high-capacity link that moves data between scattered access points and the central core network, or backbone.) “And even then, we usually have wireless as a backup option. We just don’t have connectivity issues.”

This reliable, secure software-driven network proved essential for their 110,000 square foot research-and-testing facility in Hilliard, Ohio. ADS proudly points out that the facility, opened in 2024, is the largest stormwater engineering center in the world. It relies on ultra-fast connectivity to support ADS as it develops smart water filtration solutions and controls for septic treatment systems.

Why focus on the lifecycle of a raindrop? It may seem simple, but think about the possibilities:

- Managing water can improve crop yields for farmers and improve their land for future generations.
- What happens when we treat stormwater runoff as a precious resource rather than a nuisance?
- As extreme weather events become more common with greater cost, how will communities manage water to avoid flooding and damage to their infrastructures?

As ADS engineers work to address these questions and others, AT&T will be there to support the “smart” solutions they develop.

Efficiency in the field

ADS relies on the AT&T wireless network to help get products to customers and construction sites. With about 600 semi-trucks and 1,300 trailers, ADS runs a large logistics operation. The company has a fleet management solution in place that’s similar to AT&T Fleet Complete for route optimization. Drivers use AT&T tablets and wireless services to record transactions and perform other in-cab functions on the road.

What's next: private cellular and beyond

ADS operates sprawling facilities that include laydown yards up to 60 acres. Often, yards are in out-of-the-way locations with hit-or-miss connectivity. Today, the company uses public cellular networks for coverage in these spaces. But as operations grow more sophisticated and real-time monitoring becomes critical, ADS is considering a more secure wireless service such as AT&T Private Cellular.

"We've looked at private cellular several times," Kline says. "Realistically, it's about timing and business demand. I expect we'll go down that private cellular path over the course of the next year to 18 months."

In the meantime, Kline is happy to share his thoughts with peers as a member of the AT&T Manufacturing and Transportation Advisory Council (MTAC). The MTAC brings customers and AT&T solution experts together to discuss experiences, best practices, and industry trends.

"I'm on a handful of advisory boards," Kline says. "Without question MTAC is the best. AT&T brings the right people from their side. They bring the right customers—like-minded companies facing similar challenges. The communication is genuine, and we actually solve problems together."

The bottom line

Eight years ago, ADS faced a network crisis hiding in plain sight. Invisible outages. Limited visibility. Growth that outpaced infrastructure.

Today, the company operates a connected, secure, intelligent network that scales with the business. IT problems that once took days to discover now get flagged automatically. Innovation that once felt risky now feels like a competitive advantage. That transformation didn't come from one piece of technology. It came from a relationship built on reliability, responsiveness, and shared values.

"At the end of the day," Kline says, "we have to have connectivity that works. AT&T delivers that. And then they stay with us to make sure it keeps working."



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