**How Telematics Can Help Public Works Agencies Increase Productivity**

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Telematics, which includes GPS vehicle tracking systems, provides public works agencies with a powerful tool to help cut costs and operate more efficiently. Another important but sometimes overlooked benefit is improving productivity.

A GPS vehicle tracking system gives you the precise location and performance of every vehicle and asset in your fleet. With this information, you can:

* Optimize scheduling, routing and vehicle utilization to reduce inefficiencies
* Streamline maintenance processes and reduce administrative overhead
* Complete more jobs and improve service to the community

Achieving these results starts with implementing a telematics system that includes both GPS vehicle tracking and engine diagnostics. Productivity can be further enhanced with the addition of asset tracking capabilities. Once in place, this system provides the data you need to make informed management decisions that increase productivity throughout your agency.

Improve Equipment Utilization

Telematics systems offer a variety of detailed reports that track vehicle and driver activity. By reviewing these reports regularly, you can gain insight into short- and long-term driving patterns and equipment utilization that can impact productivity. This helps you to identify problem areas and take action to use your vehicles and drivers more efficiently.

For example, some reports show the details of each trip a vehicle makes during a specified time period. Fleet utilization reports also provide a summary of overall fleet activity, indicating if trips are increasing or decreasing over time. By simultaneously tracking trips and miles, you can make informed decisions about optimizing vehicle usage.

These same reports are available for use in asset tracking. Trying to locate mobile assets in the field can be a huge time waster, especially if your agency frequently moves assets such as generators or trailers. GPS systems that include a mobile asset tracker can save time while reducing administrative headaches.

Streamline Vehicle Routing

Improving routing, even by a small percentage, can increase the overall productivity of your fleet. It also helps to lower fuel usage and greenhouse emissions. Workers can perform more jobs each day, improving productivity. And dispatchers spend less time calling drivers to find out where they are. The result is faster, more efficient work schedules, which leads to greater community satisfaction.

A GPS fleet tracking system can automatically determine the closest vehicle to a given job site or any location on the map and provide turn-by-turn directions to the selected destination. In addition, many systems offer Garmin® integration, which lets you communicate job assignments directly to the driver in the vehicle. Improved dispatching and better routing let you take on more jobs without adding vehicles or personnel. It also allows you to group multiple jobs within the same vicinity in a particular time period rather than sending employees from one side of town to another.

For example, the city of Ventura, California, uses telematics to improve productivity by enabling paving supervisors to more efficiently organize daily repair routes and better manage plans for surface maintenance. Improved route planning and vehicle utilization also helped several departments reach the city's goal of reducing fuel use by 10 percent, saving $15,000 in the process.

Using telematics, Rochester Public Utilities is able to pull information about truck locations into its GIS system. Users can see where vehicles are in relation to addresses and streets as well as to important resources such as power lines, transformers, and fuses. Field crews can be dispatched more efficiently, which is invaluable to ensuring the fastest possible response during an outage.

Streamline Maintenance and Administrative Tasks

Nothing wastes time more than a vehicle stalled on the roadside needing repair. A GPS vehicle tracking system with engine diagnostics can help prevent vehicle breakdowns in several ways. First, you can receive advance warning of engine trouble through alerts, allowing you to fix minor problems before they become larger ones. Secondly, you can set proactive reminders for oil changes, tune-ups, and other preventive maintenance activities to keep vehicles in top condition.

When using a telematics solution to manage the preventive maintenance process, the majority of work will shift to scheduled maintenance, helping diminish emergency and unexpected repairs and prevent breakdowns. And if you maintain and service your own vehicles, you may also notice that labor costs can decrease as vehicle breakdowns and unexpected repairs decline.

Increasing productivity goes hand and hand with improving service to the community. By managing your entire fleet more effectively and rewarding drivers for efficient driving habits, you will enable your fleet to drive fewer miles, reduce expenses, and get more jobs done in less time.

*About the Author*

Chris Ransom is the Director of Sales Engineering for Verizon Networkfleet. In this role, he is responsible for working with commercial and public fleets to integrate telematics technology into their operations and maximize the benefits of improved efficiencies.

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