Using GPS/AVL for Agency Compliance Management

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AT&T Fleet Manager
This guide will:

- Examine four types of activity that public fleets need to be aware of and manage:
  - Post-event claims
  - Customer service
  - Environmental compliance
  - Performance tracking
- Take a look at how compliance risks and exposure can be mitigated
- Explain how claims can be easier to deal with
Public sector fleet managers are not immune to exposure and risk. Vehicle collisions are one of the most costly areas of exposure, when it comes to fleet management, they are not the only risks an agency fleet faces.
Organizations that are prepared with accurate, dependable and easily accessible records will be better positioned to avoid the high price tag of exposure and risk.

It is difficult to contest claims using outdated and limited methods which can produce data that is not necessarily reliable and applicable to the incident and can hinder the claim process in general. Simply attempting to track down the information to investigate a claim can be a time-consuming process. It can take weeks to investigate a single claim, from determining who was on shift to contacting the driver and their supervisor and possibly going through an interview process to get the necessary information to complete an investigation.
Public fleets are finding that a wireless vehicle locator system (GPS/AVL) can save money by having solid documentation that supports appropriate responses to situations. When there has been no negligence, fleet managers have a much better chance of proving it when equipped with an effective method of tracking location, activity, driving behavior, progress and other pertinent details. With the information automated, an often complicated process is avoided by simply performing a query for the relevant data to help bring closure to the claim.

For instance, in 2015 a Toronto resident complained to the authorities that a salt truck was exceeding the speed limit and discharging a high volume of salt. GPS records were produced to document that the salt truck was at the location and route, but that at no point did it exceed 27 miles per hour and that the salt application rate was set on the lowest of three approved rates. Readily accessible GPS records resulted in an efficient investigation process and the ability to better respond to the resident’s complaint.

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Risk is about more than collisions

There are at least four activities that an agency fleet is involved with:

1. Post-event claims
2. Customer service
3. Environmental compliance
4. Performance tracking

Post-event claims

Let’s say a driver is going down the highway and hits a piece of debris, then calls the toll authority to say, “I’m paying to use your highway, and I feel you need to pay for the damage to my vehicle because I hit a piece of debris.”

A GPS/AVL system can help to show that the highway is being patrolled in such a way that the required standards are being met, thereby helping absolve responsibility for the incident. An automated system will document when, where and what was happening, and can help shut invalid claims down.

Customer service

Agencies exposed to this type of risk also have to prove to businesses/residents that they performed their service. GPS enables quick and thorough answers to customer questions and concerns, such as the salt example mentioned earlier. It also equips government agencies to provide the public with status updates during events such as storms and to help determine areas for improvement in near real-time.

Reports enable pro-active communication with customers to help meet their needs, for instance informing them about current hazards and what is being done to correct them.
Environmental concerns lead to tighter regulations

Often, government fleets are working in ways that impact the environment, and it’s important to be able to prove compliance with standards in environmentally sensitive areas, like those bordering a state or national park or a well water entry.

Environmental Example #1
Weather Challenges

Winter operations are a significant aspect of this category. Agencies that incorporate toxic materials in their operations such as salt are able to report to governing agencies such as the EPA that material usage within environmentally sensitive areas was dispensed within regulated standards.

Environmental Example #2:
Waste Management

Waste Management is another area where GPS/AVL can help increase customer service, helping ensure compliance with internal and external waste service level agreements and helping identify issues in waste fleet operations to increase efficiencies and even save on fuel.

Environmental Example #3
Increase Transparency in Public Works

Using the right system for Public Works can help improve billing accuracy and use of tax dollars, help ensure compliance with internal and external service level agreements, and boost customer service with near real-time service level reporting.
When there has been no negligence, government fleet managers have a much better chance of proving it when equipped with an effective method of tracking location, activity, driving behavior, progress and other pertinent details.

**Performance Tracking**

In this case, GPS/AVL enables fleet managers to deliver their services to the public more efficiently; it gives them more information to draw from when communicating issues, solutions and progress. Fleet managers can be proactive and ensure they are the source for delivering information to the public before it becomes viral through other avenues. One practical example of how to use the data from GPS/AVL would be to have a website that shows residents which streets have been plowed in the winter. Such a site shows customers what the agency’s fleet is doing, which establishes a better relationship between the agency and the general public.
What to look for in a GPS/AVL Solution

There are some basic GPS/AVL components that fleet managers should look for when choosing the right system for their agency:

• A foundational element is the ability to track the location of equipment.

• Another essential is management controls such as reporting: stops report, material application queries, speed, historical location, geo-fencing, snow plow up/down.

• Enhanced reporting can include level of service reporting, year-round access to claims data, and archiving of historical data.

• Interface technology can provide information for a public website, an internal website and even mobile apps.

• Reporting frequency can vary, but the most effective provide as fast as 10-second reporting, as opposed to 2-to-5 minute intervals.
Proper implementation

The goal when implementing a new GPS/AVL system is to achieve buy-in from decision makers, employees and the public. People need to understand what the agency is trying to achieve and how they each play a role in the short and long-term goals involved in that strategic plan. Educate everyone on how to use it, and communicate the importance of the technology and how it helps employees. Emphasize the benefit for the four types of activities discussed, and make sure they understand its purpose is to achieve common goals, and not as a form of discipline.

Don’t roll out a GPS/AVL system all at once. Start small and see what works and what is needed.

Awareness is the first step in preventing costly claims, customer service mishaps, and environmental non-compliance that can be reduced or prevented by effective performance tracking. The next step is choosing a system that will help document pertinent data that an agency will need to defend its position.