6 Technologies for Improved Fleet Safety

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Fleet safety issues account for a large portion of workplace fatalities today. This fact reveals the importance of putting safety measures in place across all industries, but fleets present unique safety challenges due to their mobile nature.

How do you account for worker safety when workers are dispersed throughout your service area?
This guide will examine six technologies that, when used separately or in conjunction with each other, do just that.

Technology #1: Vehicle and Asset Tracking

Locate your vehicles and field operators in real-time

With vehicle and asset tracking, managers and dispatchers have access to real-time location information for every vehicle under their care. GPS enables in-vehicle devices to send location information back to the office, where dispatchers track vehicle movement on their electronic maps. In the event of an emergency, the exact location of each vehicle is known instantly.
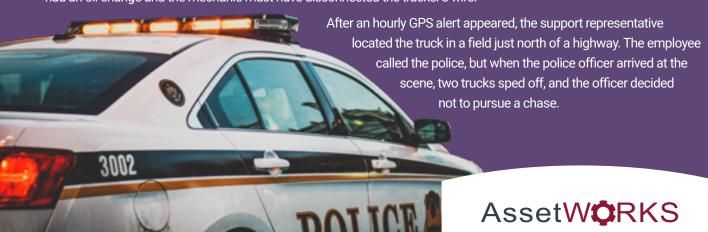
Vehicle and asset tracking can also be used to create boundaries for vehicles based either on timeframes or geographic zones. When vehicles move outside these predefined limits, managers are immediately alerted. This enables companies to track and quickly apprehend stolen fleet vehicles, and address unauthorized vehicle use or misuse.

How the AssetWorks Customer Care Team Used Asset Tracking Technology to Locate Stolen Truck

In 2016, an employee of a transport company in North America called the AssetWorks Field Service Solutions (FSS) Customer Care team with distressing news: another employee's truck was stolen.

The employee stopped at a supply shop and left his truck – worth over $100,000 – running in the lot. In the few minutes that the employee was in the shop, the truck was stolen.

Fortunately for the company, the truck was equipped with AssetWorks vehicle tracking technology so they could track the location of this valuable asset. The AssetWorks support team immediately attempted to track the location, but the GPS was only sending out location alerts once per hour. The support representatives knew that the wires must have been disconnected and the GPS tracker was running on reserve battery power. The truck driver said that earlier that day he had an oil change and the mechanic must have disconnected the tracker's wire.

After an hourly GPS alert appeared, the support representative located the truck in a field just north of a highway. The employee called the police, but when the police officer arrived at the scene, two trucks sped off, and the officer decided not to pursue a chase.

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The police needed a plan—and fast! An AssetWorks support representative came up with an idea to create an alert that whenever the truck went more than 35km/hour, it would ping its exact location. After sending out a wireless programming update, the GPS almost immediately reported its location in a town approximately 80km from where it was stolen. The police waited along the highway for the truck, but it didn't appear.

A police officer said that the last GPS ping was near a house that was well-known to the local authorities. When another ping went off by the same house, the police were granted a search warrant for the property. After their search, they found the truck just under a kilometer north of the highway, hidden in the woods with three men sitting inside it.

The police arrested the three men sitting inside the truck, and luckily it had no damages after its 130 km journey with the alleged thieves.

When asked about how AssetWorks Customer Care helped during the situation, the employee of the company said, "We definitely wouldn't have got the truck without them. The idea that [the support AssetWorks representative] had to send the 35km/hr alerts was smart, and nobody else would've thought of that. The police were thankful for all the help."

After the truck was stolen, the thieves discarded the employee's cell phone almost immediately. Most criminals know that mobile applications, like the Find My Phone app, can be used to track locations, but, in this case, they didn't realize that the AssetWorks Customer Care team was watching.

Stories like this show the importance of asset tracking technology today. To learn more about protecting your valuable assets with asset tracking technology, **visit assetworks.com/fss.**

Technology #2: Driver Behavior Monitoring

Information to correct unsafe practices

Across North America, distracted driving is estimated to be a factor in between 25% to 30% of all traffic crashes (OSHA). Though most managers would agree that managing driver behavior is important to the safety of workers and members of the public, it has been difficult to enforce safety standards from the office—until now.

A driver behavior monitoring system uses vehicle telematics data to track information, such as vehicle speed and instances of hard braking or harsh acceleration. Managers can set speed thresholds and are alerted in real-time when a driver surpasses the threshold. Managers can use this information as a corrective tool to alert drivers to unsafe behaviors and to ensure drivers are meeting your company's safety standards.

Being able to track your vehicles' speeds will help your field operators, and other drivers, be safer on the road. Not only will you reduce fuel consumption, but you can decrease the chance of an accident. Speeding on a leased or private road can also negatively impact a company's brand, which could result in customers deciding that they will not work with you or talk positively about your company's experience.

When fuel costs account for approximately 30% of most fleet budgets, finding ways to reduce consumption can make a big difference. GPS/Telematics technology allows companies to monitor driver behavior in order to track how much fuel is being wasted when field operators speed or idle unnecessarily.

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Technology #3: Electronic Logging Devices

Easily and accurately track driver hours of service

Since the ELD Mandate passed in the United States, many organizations across North America have had to invest in electronic logging devices to track hours of service.

Unfortunately, many organizations invested in ELD technology that may not be the most effective for their business and safety objectives. By selecting a device that meets the minimum requirements of the ELD Mandate, trucking organizations can miss out on powerful features that can ultimately benefit their business operations.

Making the decision based solely on low cost may lead to unreliable technology. By selecting a more comprehensive solution, you can go beyond compliance to see the benefits of improved safety and efficiency. It's a good opportunity for your fleet to become compliant while improving how your company does business.

Asking the right questions, performing due-diligence and conducting research is key to making sure that you choose an ELD vendor that you trust.

A good ELD provider should:

- Have a long-term successful track record of deploying in-cab mobile computing devices

- Be financially stable and able to update ELD devices in the event of regulatory changes

- Offer excellent 24/7 customer support

- Go beyond ELD compliance and offer fleet management functionality to deliver you long-term value and leverage your ELD technology investment

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Technology #4: Driver Vehicle Inspection (DVI)

Ensure your vehicles are road-worthy

A Driver Vehicle Inspection (DVI) solution that requires drivers to carry out a complete inspection of their vehicle before operating it can be an important component of an organization's safety policy.

Real-time collection of vehicle inspection faults ensures that vehicles with known issues aren't being used on the road. DVI inspections can be carried out using a mobile computer, tablet or smartphone. Best in class DVI functionality will prevent a driver from operating a vehicle if the inspection has not been done or if a serious fault has been recorded. This ensures that drivers are meeting DVI regulations before they even begin driving.

With a DVI solution, specific personnel, like the maintenance manager or a driver's supervisor, can be alerted via email when a defect is reported. Additionally, a DVI solution can be integrated with fleet management and maintenance software, so that an accurate record is kept of the vehicle's history and faults, and vehicles with issues can be scheduled for maintenance immediately.

Technology #5: Two-Way Messaging and Real-Time Alerting

Fast and effective communication

In an emergency situation, it is imperative that the lines of communication stay open. With in-vehicle mobile computers, drivers and dispatchers can communicate using text messages in real-time. This eliminates reliance on radio communication, keeps vital lines of communication open and keeps the driver's eyes on the road.

Not only can drivers alert dispatchers to safety issues in their vehicle, but dispatchers can also instantly send an individual driver, or a group of drivers, messages about unsafe situations, such as an impending storm.

You're able to receive real-time alerts when a critical event or problem occurs. The alerts can be set up to monitor a driver's habits when they brake too hard or get notified when a vehicle is reporting that it is low on fuel. Alerts will also notify you if a serious problem occurs. If one of your vehicles were to be involved in a crash, you'll be able to receive real-time alerts notifying you of the situation.

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Technology #6: Engine Diagnostic Monitoring

Stop maintenance issues before they become costly problems

Vehicle malfunctions can result in dangerous scenarios—from drivers stranded in high speed traffic areas due to disabled vehicles to costly accidents. Monitoring vehicle diagnostics helps facilitate the collection of vehicle data through telematics. With this data, you are able to optimize each fleet vehicle's performance by scheduling regular maintenance issues before they turn into costly safety problems.

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Conclusion

Ensuring the safety of your fleet is the most important job of any mobile fleet manager. In-vehicle and in-office technology can reduce the time required to locate a vehicle in an emergency, improve driver behavior, lower crime rates, open lines of communication and enable preventive vehicle maintenance.

When these technologies are paired with a conscientious management team, stringent safety standards and an extensive safety training program, exceptional fleet safety is within your reach.

About AssetWorks Field Service Solutions (FSS)

AssetWorks has been specializing in mobile workforce and fleet management solutions for over 35 years. With a leadership team in place since the technology was developed, AssetWorks understands the challenges faced by the trucking industry. We bring together the best ideas in GPS/AVL, ELD, fleet management, fuel management and asset management to help make your job easier.

To schedule a custom demonstration of the technologies discussed in this guide, visit assetworks.com/fss.

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