MAINTENANCE FLEET MANAGEMENT-
HOW TO MAKE YOUR TRUCKS AND ROLLING STOCK BEST IN CLASS

Over the past 17 or so years I have concentrated on helping companies improve their maintenance performance, improving efficiency, quality, and in most cases, lowering the operating and maintenance costs of the organization. When I perform a facility wide assessment and make suggestions for process improvements; travel time is always discussed since it has an impact on all of the things mentioned above.

In a standalone facility or manufacturing plant travel time can be as high as 20% of the work day. In an organization such as a campus environment or buildings that are spread around a city or region travel time can go as high as 50-60% of the work day. I realize we will never get rid of all travel time (well at least not until “Scottie” can beam us to work and back), so the mission here is to make the movement to and from the work site as cost effective as possible.

In previous TOM’s I have discussed different types of vehicles and buggies that can assist in the process of moving technicians and equipment from place to place but in this TOM I want to focus on how we manage the fleet. Your fleet should focus on several things and have some key attributes.

First, and foremost, the fleet needs to provide safe and adequate transportation for the team. Second the fleet needs to be able to carry the proper equipment, tools, and parts which will allow the team to properly complete 80-90% of their assignments. Because travel time is so expensive, the key is to ensure the team has everything they need already on the fleet buggy or truck. Don’t forget the fleet can be scooters, bicycles, push carts, vans, 4 wheelers, and or trucks. The third thing, which is critical to the proper use of fleet, is how it is maintained. Your fleet needs to be your first and best foot forward to your customers; it should be in great shape, clean, and properly maintained. Your fleet should be documented in your facility CMMS (computerized maintenance management system) with the same information tracked like purchase information, all repairs over time, all PM inspections, and tasks, etc.

This will demonstrate to the customers that your organization really knows what they are doing. Along with your clean and properly dressed technicians your washed and neat vehicles will always provide a positive attitude to your technicians as well as your customers.

The management and care of your fleet also needs to apply to the inside of the vehicle as well. The inside should be as clean and neat as the outside with everything in its proper place mounted on the wall, in shelves and drawers, and on the floor. Parts bins should be labeled with names of parts and the quantity assigned to the space. Every craft vehicle should be stocked the same with the equipment and supplies stored in the same place in every vehicle. I have assessed many organizations where the facility and the maintenance process are in the World Class category and then I go outside and ask to see some of the vans or trucks. I go around to the passenger side, open the door and there’s an avalanche of
.wrappers, cans, paper, and just trash everywhere. I go to the back or the side and look inside and it looks like a bomb went off, a real junk yard on wheels. When your customers see the inside of a vehicle like this, I’m sure they do the same thing as I do, just shake their head and swear under their breath “and, I’m paying for this?”

So here are the key steps to having a great fleet program which will ensure they are functional, safe, and assist in selling the value of your organization:

- All vehicles are properly maintained
- All vehicles are clean and washed
- Everything inside has a proper place (Might want to institute the “5-S” program)
- Each vehicle has the appropriate safety equipment
- All vehicles are inspected and organized each day. These inspections look for cleanliness, safety, proper tools, stocked parts, engine inspections, lights and other state required performance.

An inspection sheet (paper or electronic) should be completed and filed each day with discrepancies being listed for future repairs. Or if important enough, taken out of service and repaired before being used. An audit program should also be developed and put in place where management conducts audits of the daily inspections on a periodic basis.

Don’t forget the fleet may be the first thing the customer sees so you need to put your best foot forward whenever you can, maintain you fleet as well or better as you do your assets, and always ensure the fleet is outfitted and stocked to properly support the technician in the field.

Consider installing a GPS system if your fleet is large enough. I have had exposure to several systems and the benefits are incredible and in many cases unbelievable! More on this topic later.