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# 2017 FLEET MANAGEMENT GUIDE

**CONTRACTORS  
DISCUSS THE BEST  
METHODS THEY USE  
WHEN TRACKING  
THEIR VEHICLES.**



# ADOPTION OF GPS TRACKING TECHNOLOGY INCREASING AS LANDSCAPING BUSINESSES UNDERSTAND THE VALUE

**GPS Insight sponsors a report that uncovers industry challenges and solutions to fleet management.**

**GPS INSIGHT IS EXCITED TO BE THE SPONSOR** of the 2017 Fleet Management Guide produced by Lawn & Landscape Magazine. The purpose of this report is to enlighten landscape contractors about where the GPS fleet tracking industry is today and how it is impacting businesses throughout North America.

The findings of the report indicate that the landscaping industry's adoption of GPS tracking technology to manage fleets of vehicles, trailers and other mobile assets mirrors the adoption rate of the overall fleet industry. This shows that landscaping businesses are also understanding the value of the technology and realizing that it is no longer a nice-to-have tool, but a necessity to manage daily operations, reduce costs, reduce risk and increase revenue. It is expected that within a few years, the majority of fleets will use GPS tracking as a core piece of their fleet management puzzle.

Although landscape businesses are continuing to grow, there are still many challenges they face. The top three challenges related to vehicles and technology are labor costs, fuel costs and consumption and vehicle maintenance. Any one of these can take a big chunk out of a business's bottom line. It is recommended that contractors fully evaluate these expenses and risks and look for solutions to stop the bleeding.

The results of the report also identify the top ways GPS tracking helps improve fleet management. It is great to see that about 90 percent of respondents using GPS tracking today find that it helps most with increasing accountability, which addresses, directly or indirectly, all three of the top challenges faced by the landscaping industry.

Landscaping businesses rely on the performance of their trucks and crews to drive revenue and stay competitive. This is why so many business owners and managers are looking for a tool that will answer the unknowns about their workforce and provide insight on where to make improvements. GPS tracking helps solve the most problematic fleet challenges so that landscaping businesses can get back to what they do best, serving customers.

We hope you find the information in this report helpful in understanding the fleet management landscape and how using GPS tracking technology will reduce costs, reduce risk and increase revenue.



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”

**RYAN DRISCOLL**, MARKETING DIRECTOR, GPS INSIGHT

# FLEET-EFFICIENT OPTIONS

**EFFICIENCY IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST BENEFITS**

**CONTRACTORS SEE WHEN THEY INTEGRATE GPS**

**ROUTING SYSTEMS INTO THEIR FLEETS.**

By Megan Smalley

**EFFICIENCY MEANS EVERYTHING TO JOSH DEMERS,** owner of Pacific Lawn Maintenance in Spokane, Washington.

Demers founded his in 2006 as a simple lawn maintenance company to help mow neighbors' lawns. The business grew with time as Demers added new employees and vehicles to his fleet. About four years ago, though, he realized operations had become inefficient, particularly in the area of fleet management.

"We had two or three trucks driving all over town and I would be looking at Google Maps trying to make the most efficient route," he says. "Not only was that time consuming, but it was not efficient."

To improve Pacific Lawn Maintenance's fleet management, Demers added GPS tracking systems in the company's trucks in 2013, adding more software systems to the trucks in 2015.

"It's been really beneficial to us to have detailed logs of how long guys are at jobsites. It's good to see where each crew is and connect dots to move trucks around to accomplish the common goal of getting a route finished," he says. "The biggest success has been having things flow much more efficiently and smoother to decrease non-billable or drive time."

According to a recent Lawn & Landscape survey of more than 200 contractors, about 40 percent responded that their company

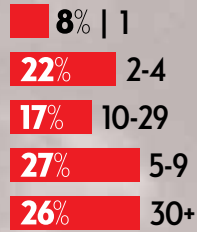






Lawn & Landscape surveyed more than 200 contractors to find their views on fleet management and GPS. Here's what we found.

#### HOW MANY EMPLOYEES DO YOU HAVE?



#### HOW MANY VEHICLES DOES YOUR COMPANY HAVE?

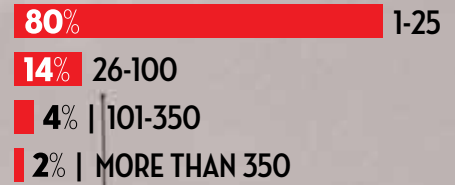
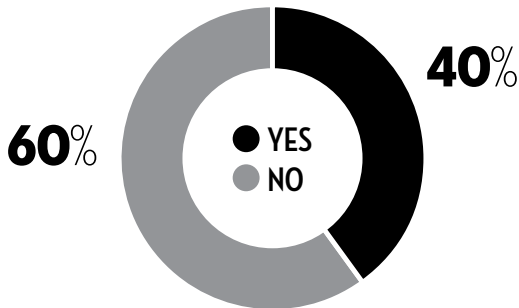


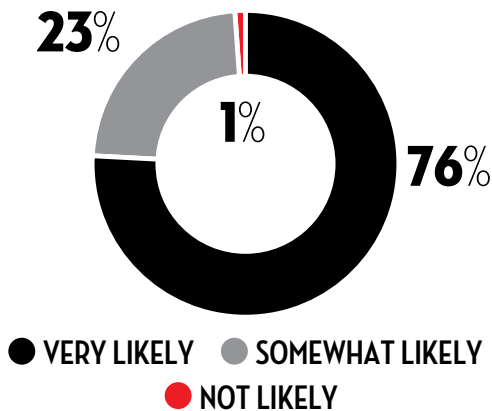
PHOTO COURTESY OF METROPOLITAN FORESTRY SERVICES

Increased accountability, proof of service and improved efficiency are top reasons contractors turn to GPS tracking technologies.

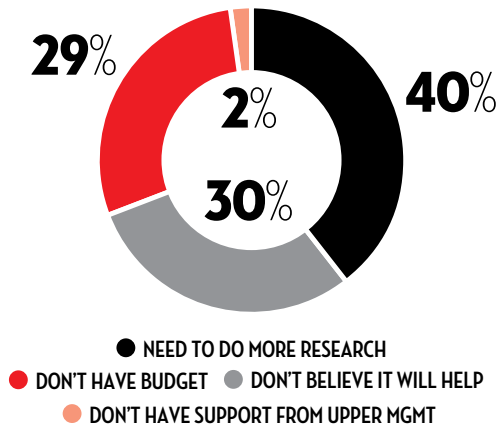
**DO YOU CURRENTLY USE GPS TRACKING TECHNOLOGY TO HELP MANAGE YOUR VEHICLES AND TECHS?**



**HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO RECOMMEND USING GPS TRACKING TECHNOLOGY FOR FLEET MANAGEMENT?**



**WHAT IS THE PRIMARY REASON YOU ARE NOT USING GPS TRACKING?**



uses GPS or routing technology. While the majority of respondents have yet to implement this technology, those who do use it report it increases accountability, provides proof of service and improves efficiency.

St. Louis-based Metropolitan Forestry Services installed GPS routing technology in its 25-vehicle fleet between 2012 and 2014. Meggan Hargrave, operations manager, says efficiency is the biggest perk with the technology. Even some of her customers have noticed the fleet's improved response times since implementing GPS technology.

"Customers who know about it think it's a nice thing that we can look up where people are and get someone to them quicker," she says. "They may not know that was GPS at work, but we can tell it increases customer satisfaction."

**LEARNING CURVE.** With new technology comes a learning curve. It took Pacific Lawn Maintenance three to four months to fully understand both its GPS routing system and additional software system after installation.

To minimize challenges, Demers implemented the technology during a slower period. "My biggest recommendation is to take time in the off-season

to really learn everything a system has to offer," he says.

Adding GPS systems also requires teaching drivers and other laborers about the new system, and that may lead to some questions. When Scott Denker, owner of Ohio-based Grounds Guys of Toledo, installed GPS routing technology in his trucks a few months ago, his drivers seemed apprehensive.

"They were standoffish," he says. "But eventually they realized, while it is a tool to know where your vehicles are, it helps with scheduling and also lowers insurance costs. Drivers have actually been driving better and idling has improved among them."

Demers received mixed reactions when he first told his drivers about the technology. "Younger employees really grabbed onto it quite quickly, while some of our older crew leaders aren't as tech-savvy."

He gave his employees a crash course on the technology as soon as he introduced the system. While he received questions from older crew leaders on how to log into the new system, these workers managed to pick up on the system in a matter of days.

Pacific Lawn Maintenance has also experienced a few hiccups with its GPS system the past few years, such



For Ohio-based Rocky Fork Company, GPS tracking helps to reduce downtime.

# FLEET PAINS

**GPS ROUTING AND SOFTWARE SYSTEMS ASIDE,** a few other issues stand out when contractors consider fleet management. **Lawn & Landscape surveyed readers and the numbers at right serve as the top three headaches when it comes to vehicles and technology.**

Labor came out as the biggest fleet management concern. Amy Tincher of Rocky Fork Company in Ohio notes this is likely of top concern because it's traditionally a company's biggest expense. "We sell service, so maximizing productive hours we get in a day is crucial. If our drivers aren't efficient in how they drive to a jobsite or if they're stopping places they shouldn't be, those are hours we aren't getting to bill out."

Meggan Hargrave of Missouri-based Metropolitan Forestry Services says labor costs are also expected to rise. "The younger generation of people wants to get paid more so now it is more important than ever to maximize the time that employees are working productively."

Both Tincher and Hargrave suggest GPS and fleet management technology can help to relieve any of these top concerns, though. "You need to measure and manage fleets," Tincher says. "GPS is a great tool for this, measuring your numbers all the time. Some may think it's cost prohibitive, or a smaller organization may see it as costly. But if you do your research, it's not that much."

**58%**  
**LABOR COST**

**51%**  
**FUEL COST**

**50%**  
**VEHICLE MAINTENANCE**

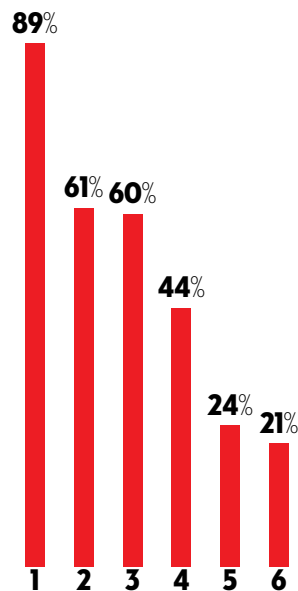
as glitches with the tablets. Although these scenarios can prove to be challenging in the moment, he says his team always manages to improvise. "If (the GPS or tablet) is down, often we can troubleshoot from the office."

**REALIZED RELIEF.** For some companies, like Rocky Fork Company in Columbus, Ohio, integrating GPS technology into their fleet has alleviated unnecessary stress. The central Ohio company features a 40-truck fleet, with about 30 of its vehicles on the road every day.

"(GPS routing) has reduced our downtime, lost hours we strive to minimize," says Amy Tincher, vice president of operations at Rocky Fork. The technology also aids with liability issues, and it particularly helps with slip-and-fall cases.

"Two years ago, we had an incident in a really large shopping center," Tincher says. "Someone said they were there early in the

## WHAT ARE THE TOP 3 WAYS GPS TRACKING HELPS YOU MANAGE YOUR FLEET?



1. Increase Accountability
2. Provide Proof of Service
3. More Efficient Routing
4. Reduce Fuel/Labor Costs
5. Enforcing safety policies
6. Improve Vehicle Maintenance

morning, and slipped and fell. Yet we hadn't even been to the site yet because the client hadn't granted us permission. So, between an email from our client and GPS verification of when we were on site and where vehicles had been prior, it released us from any liability. That liability fell back on the property owner and not us."

In this situation, the GPS routing technology came through for Tincher and her team by providing tracking history, thus saving the company from a liability claim.

"Liability-wise with snow removal, (the technology) is a lifesaver," she says.

Metropolitan Forestry Services experienced similar benefits to this type of technology after installing it in its trucks. "When (a client) is not sure that their technician was there, I'll say, 'His truck was there at 9 a.m. He rang the bell,'" Hargrave says. So, instead of making multiple

phone calls, the GPS and routing technology provides Hargrave with instant answers to most fleet-related questions.

### SOME CONSIDERATIONS.

GPS and routing technologies offer benefits for fleet management, but the technology may not be necessary for smaller fleets. Denker recommends only companies with at least five vehicles consider adding the technology. "You don't want to spend a lot of money on something and be locked into it and then not use it," he says.

However, Hargrave says some smaller companies may benefit from adding GPS in their vehicles, especially after a profitable year.

"If you have extra income that would allow you to purchase (a system), then it could definitely be a good thing. If you're a manager or owner who needs to manage five trucks, it could be a helpful addition." **L&L**