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Keeping Your Eye on The Road: Technology's Place in Pest Control Vehicle Fleets

By Peter Young

Driving from appointment to appointment in a company-owned vehicle is an everyday occurrence for many pest management professionals (PMPs); and it is a task they complete with very little forethought and, typically, few major complications. However, as fleet operations become more commonplace in the pest control industry, it can be easy to disregard the significant risks simply operating a company vehicle can place on technicians, fellow drivers in the field and pest control businesses.

Top risks

A PMP often makes multiple stops a day, travelling on side streets, major highways and through residential neighborhoods. Along the way, technicians are subjected to a number of risks that could lead to accidents and costly outcomes for the pest control businesses they represent. Just a few include:

- **Distractions:** Working in the field and on the road comes with a

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variety of distractions. On top of usual distractions such as personal text messages, adjusting the radio or reaching for an item, PMPs also may receive client and colleague calls or be pressed for time between appointments. Such distractions could leave a driver's guard down and lead to a serious accident.

- **Driver behavior:** PMPs driving company vehicles are representatives of the companies they work for and often are in vehicles displaying their company logo and phone number. Drivers engaging in dangerous driving habits such as speeding, hard braking and reckless behaviors place a risk on not only themselves and drivers around them, but the entire company through increased insurance costs, repair and replacements costs, interrupted business due to an inoperable vehicle, and reputational impacts.
- **Theft:** On any given day, a technician can enter and exit their vehicle countless times. Each time a PMP leaves their vehicle unattended, it is subject to theft, either of the entire vehicle or the equipment and parts stored inside. Thieves know work vehicles often contain expensive equipment and chemicals not available for general purchase, which may make a pest control vehicle a prime target. Replacing equipment and vehicles, or repairing them can be a costly endeavor as well as interrupt a technician's ability to fulfill client needs.

Solutions

The pest control industry depends on service vehicles for many jobs, however operating a fleet of company-owned vehicles comes with a number of risks. Fortunately, technology has evolved drastically over the years, presenting business owners with new solutions to monitor their drivers and vehicles, and to mitigate potential risk, even when technicians are on the road.

- **Dashcams:** Both driver-facing and forward-facing dash cameras can be a crucial defense for pest control fleets. Dash cams can serve as proof of who was at fault in the event of an accident and present evidence of driver behavior that creates additional risk for the company, the employee and others on the road.

- **Telematics:** Pest control business owners can use telematics to monitor their drivers' behaviors such as hard-braking or speeding. Telematics tools can come in many different forms such as a black box device or through mobile device data, but all serve the similar purpose of gathering driver data. With this data, business owners can address driver behavior and offer potential solutions.
- **GPS tracking and sensors:** Installing GPS trackers and sensors on all your fleet vehicles can help deter thieves as well as aid in quick recovery of stolen vehicles. In the event a vehicle is stolen, GPS trackers can help locate vehicles and provide alerts of vehicles that go outside their service zone. Alarm sensors on all doors of work vehicles can sound an alarm and alert technicians and their supervisors that someone has tried to enter the vehicle or access a catalytic converter, for example.



Training

While technology can be a great way for pest control business owners to monitor and track their fleet operations, the data they receive from technology should be incorporated into their training practices, rather than replace such training. Drivers should be trained in safe driving practices and company protocols at-hire, annually and whenever an incident occurs. If a driver's telematics reports reveal unsafe habits, those drivers should undergo additional training as well.

Many of the risks pest control fleets face can seem unmanageable and left to fate. With the help of technology, business owners can have a better grasp on their fleets and their drivers' behaviors, as well as offer a defense in the event of an incident. Consider speaking with

an insurance professional who understands the pest control industry to evaluate how technology can serve your fleet operations and help keep your drivers safe.



Peter Young is Program Manager for Commercial Auto, Property & Inland Marine Liability at the Brownyard Group the leading insurance program administrator behind PCOpro, specialized insurance coverage for pest control operators. He can be reached at pyoung@brownyard.com.

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