



CITY OF MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

FIELD AUTOMATION SOFTWARE REDUCES EXPENSES, GRIEVANCES, HEADACHES





The City of Milwaukee's Department of Public Works (DPW) Fleet Operations and Sanitation divisions employ just over 700 city equipment operators to handle the myriad responsibilities involved in maintaining a safe and clean environment so that the more than 604,000 people living in Milwaukee enjoy a high quality of life. The variety of the work tasks, combined with a large workforce, the unpredictable weather in Milwaukee, and an aging fleet of vehicles requiring regular maintenance, created a vexing scheduling situation for the DPW due to the time-consuming nature of an archaic manual scheduling system that was prone to human error and ensuing grievances by workers.

DPW officials contacted MSI Data, a leading provider of field workforce automation software, based in Mequon, Wis. MSI Data's advanced field scheduling software for government agencies offered a solution that created efficiency, cut costs, and offered a clear history from a single source of information for the DPW. Ultimately, MSI Data's software saved thousands of dollars for the department, reduced worker grievances by 50% and alleviated an untold number of headaches for DPW supervisors.

Before Milwaukee's DPW implemented MSI Data's advanced field scheduling software, the City's scheduling operation involved hand-writing schedules onto eight sheets of large white paper, which required attention 24-hours a day and city dispatchers to work multiple shifts. This was an entirely manual process involving pencils and a lot of paper and erasers. Referring to the old system, Chuck Schumacher, DPW Operations and Dispatch Manager, said, "It was quite a challenge to manage this process on paper. Human error is unavoidable and each mistake made during replacement scheduling while using the old procedure was compounded, causing a domino effect."

The Milwaukee DPW found that MSI Data's advanced field scheduling software for government agencies was easy to deploy and easy to learn for the DPW staff, taking between one and two weeks of training. Within one month following the software implementation, the DPW saw a dramatic reduction in the hours and manpower required to complete the formerly cumbersome daily scheduling assignment. Specifically, the time it took to schedule workers was reduced from a full day to a half day, translating into hundreds of staff hours saved during the course of a year.

Scheduling replacements and job changes on the fly with the new software are now seamless.

Specifically, the software monitors employees' job and vehicle assignments, sick days, vacation and training. The system also tracks workers' routes and locations.



John Sliga, Operations Supervisor within the City of Milwaukee's Department of Public Works, finalizing the daily schedule.

Another software feature that is helping to reduce human error is its "automated, visual exception reporting," which alerts schedulers to a problem or situation needing attention. Color coded areas alert supervisors to an issue that needs addressing. For example, areas highlighted in yellow mean there is an inconsistency in the scheduling or a field employee needs to be contacted by a dispatcher. Once the area is highlighted in green it means the problem has been resolved.

As in the past, it is important for supervisors to be on call 24-7. Prior to the new system, supervisors would need to come to their office on weekends to resolve scheduling issues due to snow or flash floods. Now, thanks to MSI Data's advanced field scheduling software's compatibility with mobile devices, emergency scheduling can now be done remotely, anytime, using Android smart phones. If a situation arises when a supervisor is out of the office, it takes just a few short minutes to add changes to the daily schedule using MSI's mobile software.

According to Schumacher, the City of Milwaukee's DPW is taking advantage of its new time-savings and the staff doesn't feel stretched as thin, thanks to the new software. "With the implementation of the new MSI software and the time savings that we are seeing, our supervisors can make better use of their time, for instance by performing field safety checks," said Schumacher.



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