

With GPS Fleet Tracking, Snowplows Beat EMS to the Scene

CalAmp helps clear the way for faster emergency response in snowy South Windsor, Connecticut.



120 municipal vehicles monitored | Improved snowplow operations | Driver exoneration

Cal/Amp



Winters in the bustling New England town of South Windsor, Connecticut,

north of Hartford, are synonymous with snow and ice, which often keep the town's fleet of 40-plus street service vehicles engaged. Real-time visibility into the location of each vehicle allows Scott Yeomans, street services associate manager, to move his snowplows like chess pieces, helping operators plow roads faster and more efficiently.

In fact, when a South Windsor resident calls emergency services, Yeomans typically has a snowplow at the resident's location, clearing the way for emergency vehicles, even before help arrives.

[A GPS fleet tracking system from CalAmp makes it possible.](#)

"We find where the nearest truck is located, move it over, and start plowing the area. Then the operator will jump out and start shoveling the sidewalk," said Yeomans. "Oftentimes, our guys are done before EMS arrives." As a result, EMS gets in and out faster. And when it comes to emergencies, every second counts.

"It's critical to be able to help our residents get medical care as efficiently as possible," said Yeomans. "The paramedics are very appreciative."



One GPS fleet tracking solution for the whole town

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After struggling with maintaining and upgrading its disparate modem-based telematics solutions, the town manager wanted a single track and trace solution that could be used across departments.

“It was time to move to something more user friendly and better suited to our needs,” said Yeomans. “Cost was a factor, too. That older technology was expensive to repair and to keep in operation, so it was time for it to go.”

Two years ago, the town switched to CalAmp’s GPS tracking solution to track all 120 of its municipal vehicles. “We looked at many platforms before choosing CalAmp,” said Yeomans.

“Our solution requires no upfront costs,” noted Ashley Gates, vice president of public sector at CalAmp. “Customers pay a monthly fee per vehicle, and it’s easy to ramp up and add more vehicles at any time.”

CalAmp’s real-time fleet dashboards not only track vehicles but also let managers compare planned runs versus actual runs and monitor fleet management KPIs.

With the GPS fleet tracking solution in place, snowplows and street sweepers as well as backhoes and other heavy equipment, fire department vehicles, human services buses and pool cars and trucks can be managed within the same system. Department managers can instantly see where every vehicle in their fleet is deployed to determine which vehicle is best-placed to respond to a need. Top city managers can get an overview of all the town’s fleets.

“Because our technology is flexible and interoperable, it supports multiple use cases

and vehicle types, making it an excellent cross-departmental solution,” said Gates.

Improving snowplow operations

Yeomans checks the dashboard several times a day. When the snowplows are out, he can optimize operations by moving vehicles that are finished with their routes to locations that haven’t yet been plowed.

Prior to implementing the CalAmp solution, Yeoman had to radio all his drivers to figure out where they were. He’d write down their locations on paper and match them to a map on the wall. Now, he said, “I can see where they are on their routes and move them as needed to help out their colleagues.”

Some inexperienced operators spend too much time plowing one street. In heavy snow conditions, the goal is to take one or two quick passes and then, once other streets on the route have been cleared, go back and do a more thorough job. The CalAmp GPS fleet tracking system lets Yeomans watch fleet operations in real time and quickly determine if an operator needs to move on.

“The system gives us the opportunity to correct an operations error, and get that guy back on track,” Yeomans noted.

At day’s end, the system lets Yeomans plan for the next day. If a plow or other street services vehicle won’t be done with its route, he can place it in the optimal starting position for the next morning.



Supporting fleet safety

CalAmp's system lets Yeomans quickly identify potential problems with drivers and vehicles.

"Let's say I can't get hold of an operator, and the vehicle's not moving when we think it should be. Is there something wrong with the individual? Is he injured? Or did he just get out of the truck to stretch his legs?" Yeomans can immediately reach out with a radio call to find out if the truck has a flat tire or the driver simply needed a break. Yeomans can also review trips to see if drivers deviate from their assigned routes.

The track and trace solution offers an extra layer of safety for drivers and reassures managers that operations are in order.

Exonerating drivers and the town

When a snowplow driver accelerates quickly in low gear to gain traction, the engine roars and snow flies. The plow can seem like it's going way over the speed limit. Sometimes an alarmed citizen will call to complain that an operator was driving like a madman, even though the top speed for plowing is 20 miles per hour. With the Synovia system, Yeomans can see any vehicle's operating history including its speed.

Track and trace data can also mitigate liability. Having a record of where every snowplow was at a given time and its operational data can potentially shield the town from damage claims. Recently, Yeomans received a complaint that a snowplow, speeding in the middle of the night, knocked down a row of mailboxes. It turned out that a third-party snow-removal service was at fault. "AVLS told us it wasn't ours," said Yeomans.

Drivers appreciate the benefits of the system, he noted. "When residents call and complain about high speeds, almost 10 times out of 10 we exonerate them because we can tell exactly how fast they were going."

When a snowstorm and a health emergency collide, a few minutes can mean the difference between life and death. Synovia's GPS fleet tracking solution helps South Windsor clear the roads for emergency services, optimize day-to-day operations and provide citizens with the excellent service they expect.