



Communicate Better[®]

Case Study



Client: Lancashire County Council

Background:

Lancashire County Council has a big job on its hands when it comes to keeping traffic moving when bad weather strikes. Fifteen salt stock locations and a fleet of gritters and snow ploughs are ready to start work as soon as ice and snow is forecast. The aim is to keep the County's roads as clear and safe as possible during the winter months, minimising delays and accidents caused by adverse weather conditions. Lancashire County Council is responsible for over 4,300 miles of roads of which around 1500 miles are part of Lancashire's Priority Road Network for salting and snow clearing.

Task:

By taking an innovative approach to ensure it beats the winter chill, the council is investing in technology to revamp gritting operations. Working with Communicate Better and TomTom, the council has installed a tracking and navigation system which will reduce human error when gritting roads and cut fleet operational costs. It is a move which could point the way forward for local authorities hoping to avoid the kind of traffic problems which hit roads across the UK each winter as a result of snow and ice.

Strategy:

Communicate Better has worked with Lancashire County Council to introduce TomTom Truck units across its winter services fleet. The system allows council officials to define gritting routes in advance before sending them remotely to the appropriate in-cab navigation device via the mobile data network. Communicate Better worked with Lancashire County Council to digitise routes, including specific salt on and salt off instructions, allowing the system to tell drivers when and where to start or stop gritting. Rather than relying on written instructions, drivers are guided by satellite navigation technology to make sure all necessary roads are gritted, while council bosses can monitor progress in real time.

Results:

To ensure vehicles remain stocked with salt, the system can send drivers to the nearest depot, rather than their depot of origin, whenever they need to refill. Once restocked, vehicles are returned to the exact point on the route where gritting was stopped.

Truck-specific navigation means directions take into account the specific dimensions of each vehicle, ensuring they are not navigated down narrow roads or under low bridges and vehicle alterations are also taken into account, meaning drivers of vehicles fitted with snow ploughs are provided an audible warning when approaching roads fitted with speed bumps, reminding them to lift their plough.

The council are forecasting the new system will deliver up to £120,000 in cost savings across the next three years, a significant saving that could be replicated by other local authorities across the UK by utilising similar technology.



“Transport Managers can now keep a track of each vehicle, allowing them to better monitor the process and reduce the possibility of human error caused when drivers are relied upon to remember specific routes. We are very pleased with the efficiencies the new system will be able to provide for the Council.”

Lancashire County Council

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