

Improving council services with better inspections

A surprisingly risky occupation



Collecting waste might not sound like a dangerous affair. But it happens to be one of the riskiest occupations in the UK, mainly because it involves operating heavy machinery and operatives working alongside large vehicles in the highway.

This means local authorities need to keep a close eye on health and safety standards in their refuse collection operations. It is important to carry out regular inspections and deal rapidly with any shortcomings. But maintaining first-rate inspection regimes is not easy.

Waste collection crews are constantly on the move, often labouring outside of normal working hours with little time or opportunity to stop and undergo an inspection. And even when you can pin down a crew to carry out an inspection, there is a chance a paper-based inspection record will be lost or damaged before the results can be logged on a computer system.

At the City of Cardiff Council, the inspection team found a way to overcome this problem: catch the collection crews while they were having a break. Crews tended to congregate at the same place to take their driving breaks, allowing the inspectors a chance to run through the inspection process. This reduced the time spent chasing collection crews and made it easy to complete many inspections in a short span of time. But Matthew Long, development and projects manager, worried that the quality of the inspections might suffer as the inspection results did not reflect the work being carried out.

“Some of the things the inspectors were supposed to review included seeing how operatives lifted and carried waste items and observing good practice when reversing vehicles,” he says.

“However, because of the inspection challenges we had, there was a danger that these key observations would be missed.”



An answer in an unusual location

Another problem was that even if inspections could be carried out fully, it was often difficult to track follow-up actions. The Council needed a way to make it easier for inspectors to log their results, and to schedule and review any ensuing actions.

The answer was to be found in an unusual place: the Cardiff International White Water centre at the Cardiff International Sports Village in Cardiff Bay. The council-owned centre was using Papertrail for its safety equipment inspection records.

With Papertrail, inspection results could be logged from anywhere, using mobile devices, and the system could be set up to trigger alerts regarding follow-up actions.

“It was a council-approved solution and It seemed like just the thing we were looking for to help capture the data from our refuse collection service inspections,” Matthew Long says.

In April 2017, Papertrail was rolled out across the Council’s waste collection services, which covers two shifts consisting of 120 workers and 36 vehicles.

Improving the quality of the service

Today, Papertrail is helping to improve the quality of Cardiff’s waste and recycling collections in many ways. One example is that previously inspectors would find it hard to know when a given operative had received training for the work they were doing, and would find it difficult to recommend refresher training.

The training records were only available for viewing via a Human Resources system, from 9am to 5pm, while waste collection takes place from 6am to 10pm. Now the records are available on Papertrail and can be viewed by the inspectors at any time. And Papertrail’s reporting flexibility means it is now possible to capture ad-hoc safety observations, and identify and concerns that would not have been easily reported on before.

Some of the improvements may seem minor, such as tracking wear and tear on work boots or always carrying identity badges, but even these can have a big impact on the overall quality of the service.

“We’ve seen an increase in the reporting. We’re not chasing inspections these days.”

MATTHEW LONG
DEVELOPMENT AND PROJECTS MANAGER



Increasing quality and compliance

Perhaps the most important benefit, though, is that Papertrail is helping to improve the accuracy and visibility of inspection results, which in turn is helping to increase quality and compliance.

“Inspectors can record something once and the system will do all the work behind the scenes,” says Matthew Long. “We’ve seen an increase in the reporting. We’re not chasing inspections these days.”

Since adopting Papertrail, the Council has become aware of a wider range of issues that need seeing to. That is a good sign. “Before, everything was being reported back as perfect, which we knew was not the case,” he says.

Now that more issues are coming to light, it is easier to schedule follow-up training or take remedial action, improving the safety of operations and the quality of service.

Papertrail’s scheduling features are also making it easier to stick to inspection schedules. “You can ensure consistency across the board,” says Matthew.

With Papertrail delivering benefits to waste collection, the Council is now looking to extend the platform across other areas. Matthew is confident the Papertrail team will deliver wherever is required to make the rollout a success.

“They can see how important it is for us,” he says.

Start reducing your risk today

If you’re still relying on a paper-based system to track inspections then you may not be paying much... but it could be costing you millions in fines, reputational damage and post-incident investigations if there is a problem. Is that a risk you want to carry on taking?

Find out how you can run a smarter, safer service today with Papertrail.

**Call us now on +44 1248 719270
or write to us at mail@papertrail.io.**

About Cardiff Council

The County Council of the City and County of Cardiff is the governing body for Cardiff, one of the Principal Areas of Wales. The council consists of 75 councillors, representing 29 electoral wards.

About Papertrail

Papertrail was created out of the need to find an easier way to keep accurate records and demonstrate compliance for equipment inspections and audits.

Today, industry-leading partners, SMEs to larger enterprise and public sector organisations and their staff and contractors trust Papertrail to drive business efficiencies and optimise compliance by managing equipment inspections, certification and safety records.

Find out more at
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