

Case study

City of Boise

Raising the Barcode



At a glance

Industry: Government

Application: Warehouse Automation

Intermec Cooperation Helps Remove Excess Waste Out of Wastewater Management Operations

As the Computer Systems Technician for the City of Boise, Idaho, Melissa Rushton got to a point where she got sick of the waste. Not the waste that went throughout the hundreds of miles of pipelines running through the city's wastewater system, but the waste of time and inventory expended to keep the system in operation. Knowing that there had to be a more efficient way to operate, Rushton began looking for alternatives.

A proponent of technology, Rushton liked what she saw when she traveled to Pierce County, Washington, to examine their implementation of barcode technology into their operations. Deployed five years prior, the Pierce County system used Intermec Wireless Barcode Scanners in conjunction with Hansen warehouse management programs and JMT Systems mobile solutions to streamline their operations. The technological updates reduced labor, improved accuracy, and enabled Pierce County workers to get rid of traditional pen and paper inventory systems.

When making the decision to update the City of Boise to a centralized barcode system, Rushton called upon JMT systems and Intermec to assist in developing a customized solution. Mike Bosko, president of JMT Systems and staunch

proponent of Intermec devices, met with Rushton to assess the city's needs.

"We worked with the city over conference calls, onsite meetings, and took tours of the warehouse," says Bosko. "We really wanted to gain user input and feedback in order to develop a robust software solution that kept support requirements to a minimum."

A packaged solution was developed by matching a version of Falcon Automation that interfaced with a warehouse management system in Intermec's 751 mobile computer and Intermec 3400 printers. This automated inventory solution saved time, money and inventory. Deployment of the project only took three months.

The Choice

Before making the decision to change over the operations to a barcode system, Rushton knew she wanted to use Intermec technology.

"I knew we wanted Intermec products because of their reputation for durability," Rushton stated. "Because the products were going to be used in a concrete building with very little heat, we wanted something that could withstand a variety of elements. After speaking with numerous



people who used Intermec's products, we knew it was the solution for us."

Prior to implementing the system in two of the three different wastewater treatment warehouse locations in Boise, employees had to do everything by hand. All receipts, cycle counts, and transfers were documented manually, requiring workers to record information twice. Employees would come into the warehouse to check out a piece of equipment, and write down the product information onto a piece of paper. That piece of paper would then be handed to the supply person who entered the information into the database. The process was slow and riddled with inefficiencies.

After implementing the barcode solution, City of Boise workers are able to take the Intermec mobile computer into the warehouse and scan the barcode, which immediately recognizes the product being removed from inventory. At the end of the day, the unit is situated on a docking station to upload the day's transactions to a centralized database that helps control inventory and costs.

"It has helped us become significantly faster in our cycle counts," says Rushton. "Rather than doing it manually and

going back in and re-keying the data later, it's there and updated. This has really helped with making the workers more accountable as they're more likely to scan something than write it on a piece of paper. It makes our operations more accurate and it's just easier."

The Savings

Since the implementation of the system, Rushton acknowledges that it has assisted in the purchasing process. Rather than each site buying individually, the Intermec/JMT solution has enabled the three sites to collaborate on their orders. Group purchasing drives down costs, reducing expenses for the department.

"We've been able to coordinate our purchasing amongst the three sites because we have a lot better feel for what we have in inventory and what we might need in the near future," says Rushton. "With this system, we can join together and place just one purchase order."

When employees save time, it frees them up to do other activities. Employees have been able to conduct cycle counts more frequently, which in turn helps control inventory so parts don't run out. The time savings has also enabled

employees to spend more time analyzing the types of parts stocked and adjusting inventory when plants are updated. They're also able to identify critical parts that weren't previously identified to assist with priority purchasing.

In addition to the monetary savings, those employees who have embraced the technology acknowledge their satisfaction with the new system, elevating morale.

"Every couple of afternoons the supply person in the warehouse will come into my office and tell me how many transactions they have just downloaded," says Rushton. "They just love using it because it saves them so much time."

Within the next few months, Rushton hopes to update JMT's software solution to include their real-time technology so information is instantly downloaded to the server rather than just once a day. In the meantime, the operation will continue to adjust to the new streamlined capabilities, saving additional time and money. For Rushton and the City of Boise, Intermec and JMT Systems delivered a barcode solution that has improved operations by reducing the waste of time and money in their wastewater treatment facilities.

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