



CASE STUDY

Billings Fire Department

Billings FD Simplifies Checks, and Saves \$\$\$ in Asset Management and Inventory

Managing a city's assets, equipment, and inventory is a big and complex task. Even when considering just one city department—the fire department—it is a big daily chore to document maintenance, repairs, inventory counts, vehicle and equipment checks, turnout gear orders, and logging all the serial numbers, supplier information, costs, etc. associated with all the department's assets.

Transition to Digital Documentation Transforms Operations

Billings Fire Department in Montana moved from a paper and filing cabinet system to a digital system with the convenience of 24/7 web access and a mobile app. Vector Check It has transformed the way Billings FD manages just about everything. For example, reports on out-of-service vehicle time can be shared with the City Council to justify new trucks and engines. When it's time to put the chains on in winter, they know the exact storage location size and no longer have to hunt them down. They have a complete digital inventory with corresponding information (i.e. costs, serial numbers, warranty, etc.) of everything that is on each vehicle so if something is stolen or damaged, they have everything needed for police and insurance reports. The Check It app helps Firefighters increase their efficiency with their checks, and supervisors can see who has done what. Everyone has visibility into the status of all vehicles and equipment and a real-time snapshot of what is in inventory across all the stations, storerooms, and trucks.



About Billings Fire Department

Billings is the largest city in the state of Montana, with a population of 109,577 as of 2019. Billings FD had over 18,000 calls for service in 2020, and manages all assets and gear for 7 stations and 124 personnel, which includes firefighters, paramedics, EMTs, administrative personnel, and fire inspectors. Billings FD also oversees the 9-1-1 communications center, which employs 37 staff.

Captain Chelsea Thompson is the Logistics Officer and has served with Billings FD for 17 years, starting as a firefighter, then driver engineer, and then moving to a Captain where she now manages logistics and is the Check It Admin. "Since implementing Check It, we have reduced our list of missing inventory from 10 1/2 pages down to just one now that we have everything documented and can easily audit our inventory," said Capt. Thompson. "We have finished building out the Fire Department on Check It and have also suggested to our City Fleet Department, which includes over 400 vehicles, that they also use the application to help manage all fleet assets."



Making Things Easier for Everyone

Billings FD has streamlined their maintenance and ordering logistics with Check It. Previously, there wasn't an easy way for engineers and mechanics to communicate. Now with Check It, they can enter maintenance tickets with notes and upload videos and photos to better describe the issue. Mechanics can update the tickets and everyone has a real-time view of the issues and timelines for when items will be back in service. Even non-tech savvy users find the Check It app easy to use and it removes a lot of the workload off managers because drivers and mechanics can directly communicate through the app. Capt. Thompson explained another example of how they have used Check It to streamline gear replacement. "When one of our Firefighters needed a pair of boots replaced, he was able to just enter the reorder request and uploaded a picture of his boots," said Capt. Thompson. "I was able to easily get the manufacturer's information for the boots and saw they were still under warranty, so we got them replaced and communicated back to the Firefighter on the same day that we received the request—all within the Check It application."



Saving Time

Check It is also helping the crews save a lot of time. Battalion Commanders can easily see if they are down a brush rig for the day and where all their standby rigs are without having to find someone who has that information. Whether during normal operations or unusual times, Billings FD continues to discover more ways to use the app to streamline and simplify operations. "Check It was a lifesaver during the COVID-19 pandemic because we knew exactly how many gloves and N95 masks we needed as our call volume increased," said Capt. Thompson. "We tracked N95s carefully, along with the sizes and expiration dates, so that we had enough supply without creating unnecessary waste."



Improved Compliance and Accountability

Billings FD has added iPads with the Check It app installed to all their trucks and engines to simplify their daily, weekly, and quarterly checks. They set up the Check It inspection form to follow the direction that the Firefighters walk around the vehicle and in the order of all the items that need to be checked. Supervisors can quickly see who has and has not done their checks and improve their compliance and accountability. It's also simplified restocking supplies without having to wait for paper to be routed back to the stations. Whether it is a door wedge, surgical cricoid kit, life pack, or something else, the items will show missing until personnel check it in on the app. "We can see what has expired and what we need to replenish, like IV needles," explained Capt. Thompson. "We can do a quick run count anytime on any items without having to do a full inventory count."