

Solutions at Work: Potomac Electric Power Company



Product: ToolHound Desktop

Client: Potomac Electric Power Company (Pepco) is an energy company delivering and maintaining electric service to customers in and around the Washington D.C. metropolitan area.

Challenge: With approximately 2,500 employees on staff and a number of contractors, inventory and warehouse management is an immense challenge. Steve Moler, a member of the warehouse management team, has the difficult task of monitoring the movement of all the valuable assets such as tools, equipment and computer hardware.

Prior to the installation of ToolHound, Pepco monitored the movement of tools with a paper file system coupled with a stand-alone inventory balance tracking system. According to Moler, this seemingly endless paper trail created many problems, such as lack of history of activity or cost, lost assets, inventory control, and maintenance control.

Solution: Implementation of the system involved assigning, printing and affixing bar code labels to equipment. Consumable material labels were affixed to storage components or bin cards. Bar code labels were also printed and assigned to employees who have the approval to remove material or equipment by material/equipment type. Controls were set to track activity, conditions (such as number of days equipment can be used before being returned or tested) and transaction history. As part of their system, Pepco also employs handheld wireless radio frequency (RF) scanners to input and transmit data to a central computer in real-time; a significant improvement over traditional batch scanners that require users to periodically download data to their workstation.

Results: Moler feels that ToolHound has had a significant impact on Pepco's day-to-day operations. Moler says, "Now that equipment is tracked and employees know they are accountable, tools are returned and very few ever go missing. Forecasting of material requirements is now possible. Stock-outs and redundant purchasing is now a thing of the past. Scheduled equipment testing and maintenance also helps the company avoid unnecessary repair costs."

Efficiency has been another major benefit of implementing a computerized asset tracking system. Moler claims, "Using a scanner has virtually eliminated all keyboarding activity. RF scanners also allow up to the minute reporting. As soon as a transaction has been scanned, the computer and everyone else using it knows that a particular item has been issued."

Perhaps one of the most beneficial features that Pepco has experienced is the powerful functionality of ToolHound. In particular, Moler has taken advantage of the report writer, work order and issue to locations features. What used to be an impossible task of reporting and record keeping is now a couple of mouse clicks from start to finish.

Moler adds, "Having the computer tell us when we are short on an item or when something requires maintenance has been invaluable. The system automatically informs us when inventories are below our minimum levels and a purchase order is automatically created."

Recently Pepco has sold off its power generation facilities, which also signaled the sell-off of their tool rooms. Not wanting to let a good thing go to waste, Moler creatively reassigned their ToolHound system to monitor the movement of computer hardware. "It's really no different than tools. As long as you have valuable assets that are always coming and going, you need to track them and ToolHound certainly does the job."



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