

# Fleet Management Software: An Invaluable Tool in the Fleet Industry

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Fleet management software revolutionized all aspects of the fleet industry. Since its origination, the technology has grown and adapted to the needs of fleets and fleet managers. Although all fleet management software was created to simplify the organization and function of fleets, there are a multitude of features and functions that may differ from each fleet management software company.



## Fleets and Fleet Management

To have a comprehensive understanding of the value of fleet management software, it's important to first examine fleets and fleet management itself.

Fleets may refer to any group of commercial motor vehicles, such as trucks, cars, busses, vans—even ships and aircrafts. Essentially, a fleet is an assemblage of vehicles utilized by businesses, governments and other organizations. Like all aspects of a business, these vehicles require management to ensure:

- Safety regulations are upheld
- Finances are controlled
- Vehicles and drivers are tracked and managed
- Speed and fuel is monitored

In other words, fleet management is the organization and supervision of a fleet of vehicles, and the tasks pertaining to them, to ensure the overall wellbeing of the fleet as an entity. The goal of fleet management is to reduce any potential risks, as well as improve the fleet’s efficiency, manage costs and ensure all aspects of safety are enforced.

While some businesses may utilize only a small fleet of vehicles, the importance of organized management is no less valuable. Some fleet managers may attempt to keep up with tasks such as maintenance scheduling using Excel sheets and paper forms that often get lost in the shuffle. Excel tracking, paper forms and other less sophisticated measures are simply inadequate when considering the size and importance of managing a fleet. Not only is there more room for error, these primitive methods do not yield the same level of efficiency, tracking, reporting or scalability. Because efficiency and organization are imperative to the supervision of vehicles, fleet management software was created to simplify this process in a more accurate, efficient way.

### What Is Fleet Management Software?

A fleet manager is in charge of many tasks pertaining to the overall function of his or her fleet, including preventive maintenance, parts tracking, warranty recovery, training, budgeting, shop management and much more. In turn, fleet management software is a program that keeps track of this data. Put very simply, fleet management software acts as a company-wide calendar for all



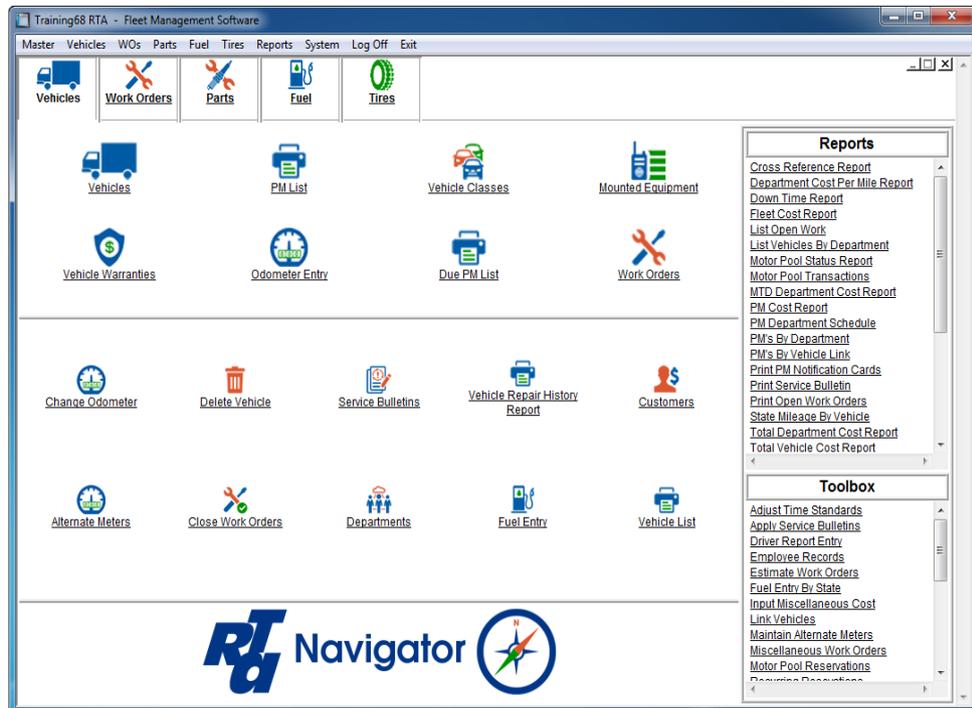
facets of scheduling, a point of communication between employees, a tracking system to monitor vehicles and a superior, virtual filing cabinet with easily accessible data information and history.

Industries that use fleet management systems include:

- Construction
- Transit
- Freight and OTR
- Municipalities/government
- Utilities
- Coach and limo
- Police and emergency
- Waste management
- School and bus
- Farming
- Public works
- Food delivery
- Many more

## Fleet Management Software Functions: What Does It Do?

Like all aspects of technology, fleet management software has evolved. What started on mainframe computers in the 1970s, to personal computers in the 1980s, has now shifted to flexible, web-based and locally hosted software programs. While all fleet management systems are different, many of their core functions are the same:



## ***Preventive Maintenance Tracking and Scheduling***

Preventive maintenance (PM) keeps vehicles in operating condition at the lowest possible cost. A complete preventive maintenance program requires four items:

1. An efficient form and system
2. An accurate schedule
3. A well-trained mechanic
4. A quality control program

PM software is designed to track these items and make them as efficient as possible. It generates records of vehicle inspections, repairs, part failures and more. The rule of thumb is that 3 to 8 hours are saved for every 1 hour of PM investment, so software that makes it easier to track the details can save fleet managers a great deal of time.

## ***Parts Inventory and Warranty Tracking***

Managing the right amount of parts and ensuring the right parts are available are key components to a fleet's success. One expert estimated that most fleets stay under-stocked on 35-40% of parts and overstocked on 25%. Fleet management software enables shop managers to track inventory for all parts. Some platforms integrate this process with handheld barcode readers.

Warranty tracking can notify a mechanic when a repair is covered under a variety of warranties, including OEM (e.g. bumper-to-bumper), extended (e.g. powertrain) and component/after-market (e.g. parts). Once a repair is flagged as a warranty item on the screen, a mechanic can create a claim in the system and track the collection on that claim from the vendor. Take the fact that 5 minutes of warranty paperwork generally yields \$110, and multiply by dozens of parts per vehicle and hundreds or thousands of vehicles to see the potential savings.

## ***Scheduling and Communication***

Like managers in any field, scheduling is time-consuming but crucial for the day-to-day function of a business. Fleet management is no different, which is why software enables scheduling for all branches of the fleet. From driver shifts to regular maintenance, these systems act as a calendar for the entire fleet and even send reminders so nothing is overlooked and no unnecessary tasks are repeated.

In fact, these systems' scheduling features also act as a platform for communication between drivers, shift managers and mechanics. With note-taking functions, a mechanic may begin his or her

scheduled shift efficiently by looking at the notes from the mechanic or manager from the shift before. A schedule paired with clear, easy-to-read notes, requests and overviews enable employees working for a fleet to be more efficient and productive.

## System Value Analysis: Valuable Features a Fleet Management Software Should Encompass

Aside from the common core features the majority of fleet management programs share, a valuable fleet management system should include features that facilitate:

1. Mechanic productivity
2. Mechanic accountability
3. Preventive scheduling
4. Purchasing help
5. Budget help
6. Warranty help, repeat repairs, failure analysis
7. Parts inventory control
8. Fuel inventories
9. Reports
10. Speed
11. Pop-up windows
12. Paperless capabilities
13. Lifetime detailed history
14. On-screen help
15. Adaptability to fleet type
16. Scheduling for non-PM work
17. Close lines on repair orders

## How to Start Using Fleet Management Software

While all systems are different, most fleet management systems work similarly:

1. After downloading the software, add a fleet of vehicles into the system.
2. Determine what data to track, such as inventory control and vehicle condition.
3. Enter any additional vehicles as well as the company assets; the software will provide detailed reports about the fleet's ongoing status.
4. The software forms and applications should be filled out regularly by the fleet manager to maintain up-to-date and accurate data.

	Part Number	Description	On Order	Received	Unit Price	Unit	Status	Freight
<input type="checkbox"/>	1-7780	MODULATOR	1.0	0.0	\$13.8500	Each	Open	\$0.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	1342	FILTER OIL	2.0	0.0	\$46.8000	LOT	Open	\$0.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	125-1580	PUMP WATER	1.0	0.0	\$52.8900	Each	Open	\$0.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	108-8557	STEERING VALVE	1.0	0.0	\$674.1660	Each	Open	\$10.00

## What Kind of Data Can the Software Gather?

The options are virtually limitless with the right software. Data can pertain to internal departments and company facilities. Aside from vehicle tracking, many fleet management software systems keep track of inventory, to ensure only the necessary items are stocked, as well as vehicle condition data. [RTA Fleet](#) suggests in order to properly manage a fleet, data must monitor:

- Fuel usage
- Oil consumption
- Part failure
- Brake wear
- Routine maintenance

Status	Item Description
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Drive on inspection
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for DVCRs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for Special Order Parts
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Ease of Starting
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Parking Brake Operation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Horn Operation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Operation of Gauges and Accessories
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Dash Lights
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Operation of Windows and Door Locks
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inspect Seat Belts and Safety Equipment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Test Service Brakes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check HVAC System
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Steering Wheel Free play or Bind
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inspect Windshield and Visors
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Windshield Wiper Operation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check All Special Equipment for Proper Operation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Radio Ground Cables
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Siren & Speakers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Circle Inspection
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check for Physical Damage
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inspect Push Bumper for Damage
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Mirror Mountings
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Lights and Reflectors
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check Operation Doors and Latches

## **Benefits of Fleet Management Software**

Fleet management software can benefit many aspects of a fleet by:

***Increasing employee and fleet productivity, safety and overall efficiency***– With fleet management software, it is easy to assign and track tasks, facilitating clear communication. Driver analytics are easy to view for increased safety.

***Reducing Paperwork*** – Celebrated by mechanics everywhere, fleet management systems enable easy communication, task recording and inventory tracking, without the need for frivolous paperwork.

***Reducing Environmental Impact*** – Small vehicle maintenance changes not only result in increased savings, but also a minimized carbon footprint.

***Controlling Costs*** – Fleet analytics ensure smarter fuel, vehicle and equipment purchases in addition to small maintenance changes that save money over time.

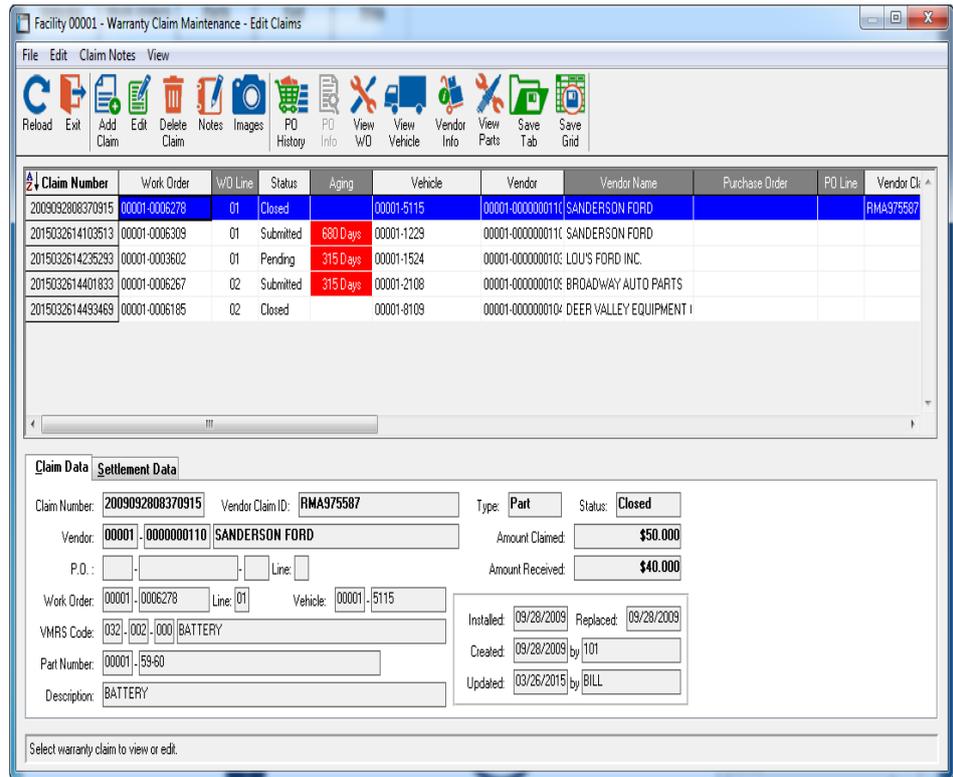
***Offering Plentiful Data for Comprehensive Planning*** – With increased data in a fleet's records, managers can consider past information when going forward with standard operating procedures.

## **Best Practices for Fleet Managers**

While software is invaluable to fleet managers, there are ways to optimize the overall function of fleets with best practices. Fleet management software only offers its money and time-saving benefits when managers are continually reporting and inputting information to the system. Scheduling preventive maintenance will not be beneficial if past appointments were not recorded, therefore resulting in inaccurate maintenance cycles. Utilizing the full capacity of the scheduling and communication features of a software system will benefit a fleet in the long term. RTA Fleet outlines these best practices in the white paper, [\*Five Best Practices for Fleet Managers\*](#).

## How Can Fleet Managers Save Fleets Money?

Along with best practices, there are some small, operational changes that can exponentially save money for fleets over time with the assistance and use of a management system. These practices include:



The screenshot displays a software window titled "Facility 00001 - Warranty Claim Maintenance - Edit Claims". It features a menu bar (File, Edit, Claim Notes, View) and a toolbar with icons for Reload, Exit, Add Claim, Edit, Delete Claim, Notes, Images, PO History, PO Info, View WD, View Vehicle, Vendor Info, View Parts, Save Tab, and Save Grid. Below the toolbar is a table with the following columns: Claim Number, Work Order, W/O Line, Status, Aging, Vehicle, Vendor, Vendor Name, Purchase Order, PO Line, and Vendor Cl. The table contains five rows of data. Below the table are two tabs: "Claim Data" and "Settlement Data". The "Claim Data" tab is active, showing fields for Claim Number (2009092808370915), Vendor Claim ID (RMA975587), Type (Part), Status (Closed), Vendor (00001-000000110 SANDERSON FORD), Amount Claimed (\$50,000), Amount Received (\$40,000), Work Order (00001-0006278), Line (01), Vehicle (00001-5115), VMRS Code (032-002-000 BATTERY), Part Number (00001-59-60), and Description (BATTERY). A metadata section shows dates and users for Installed, Replaced, Created, and Updated. At the bottom, there is a prompt: "Select warranty claim to view or edit."

Claim Number	Work Order	W/O Line	Status	Aging	Vehicle	Vendor	Vendor Name	Purchase Order	PO Line	Vendor Cl
2009092808370915	00001-0006278	01	Closed		00001-5115	00001-000000110	SANDERSON FORD			RMA975587
2015032614103613	00001-0006309	01	Submitted	680 Days	00001-1229	00001-000000110	SANDERSON FORD			
2015032614236293	00001-0003602	01	Pending	315 Days	00001-1524	00001-000000100	LOU'S FORD INC.			
2015032614401833	00001-0006267	02	Submitted	315 Days	00001-2108	00001-000000100	BROADWAY AUTO PARTS			
2015032614493469	00001-0006185	02	Closed		00001-8109	00001-000000100	DEER VALLEY EQUIPMENT I			

**Claim Data** | Settlement Data

Claim Number: 2009092808370915 | Vendor Claim ID: RMA975587 | Type: Part | Status: Closed

Vendor: 00001-000000110 SANDERSON FORD | Amount Claimed: \$50,000

P.O.: | Line: | Amount Received: \$40,000

Work Order: 00001-0006278 | Line: 01 | Vehicle: 00001-5115

VMRS Code: 032-002-000 BATTERY | Installed: 09/28/2009 | Replaced: 09/28/2009

Part Number: 00001-59-60 | Created: 09/28/2009 by T01

Description: BATTERY | Updated: 03/26/2015 by BILL

Select warranty claim to view or edit.

### 1. Maximizing Warranty Recovery

Many fleets miss out on thousands of dollars per year in unclaimed warranties ([source](#)). In fact, the return on warranty time investment is often as high as 20:1, making it one of the most profitable operations in a shop. Collecting warranty is typically worth \$340-\$420 per vehicle during the first seven to eight years of life.

### 2. Advancing Preventive Maintenance

A fleet manager must put together a complete preventive maintenance program that utilizes:

- An efficient form and system
- An accurate schedule
- A quality control program

The goal of effective preventive maintenance is to minimize costs caused by breakdowns and unscheduled time in the shop with regular vehicle and equipment maintenance checks. Similarly, well-planned maintenance checks ensure time is not wasted on redundant scheduled maintenance.

By putting a preventive maintenance program in place, 3 to 8 hours are saved for every 1 hour of PM (preventive maintenance) invested. This is mostly because items are often repaired in conjunction with the PM, resulting in vehicles or equipment that does not have to be worked on multiple times between inspections. An advanced PM system spends 50% of its time on PM, which leads to less road calls, drop-ins or unscheduled maintenance.

### ***3. Managing Tire Expenses***

Tire expense is the third greatest expenditure of most fleets, typically following fuel and payroll. As a fleet manager, monitoring tire inflation, alignment and pressure can save thousands of dollars. Running a tire just 10% overloaded, for example, can rob the user of 16% of its tire life, meaning a \$200 tire will only deliver a \$168 service ([source](#)). Additionally, for every half of an inch out of alignment, a tire is dragged sideways for 28 feet per mile driven. What's more? Fuel consumption from low tires costs more than the actual waste of tires due to low pressure. Keeping track of tire data with a fleet management software can save a considerable amount of money.

#### **What to Ask, and Consider, When Purchasing a Fleet Management Software**

When looking for the right fleet management software, there are important questions to ask each vendor, and consider through your own research, to ensure the best program is purchased for your fleet.

##### ***Is the provider a trusted company with an established track record?***

This should be easy to discover online. Before contacting a software provider, research how long the company has been in business. Trusted vendors will be highly ranked on software ratings websites, such as [Capterra](#). Not only will these systems be well known within the industry, they should also have their own case studies and non-anonymous testimonials. RTA, for example, is a Capterra Top Ten ranked software.

##### ***Is the software scalable?***

Your fleet may be small now, but what if it grows? If given the opportunity, your fleet management software should not be an obstacle in the way. RTA recommends a management software have the capability to handle anywhere from 25 to 25,000 vehicles. Confirm with the product vendor that the software's technology has the capacity to handle growth.

### *Is integration possible?*

Many fleets, due to size or different locations, utilize multiple systems. In this case, it is important for the fleet management software to have the capability to integrate to share data and minimize double entry.

### *Does the software depend on another company for any functions?*

This may be hard to believe, but many fleet management software systems rely on another company, such as Google Maps, for a function within the program. In this case, the dependent software company is vulnerable to third-party technical failures and is at the mercy of Google's terms, which may change at any time.

### *What is the return on investment? What will the yearly fee get you?*

Fleet management software prices can range widely. However, the value truly lies in the return on your investment, which should be enough to pay for the cost of installation. Similarly, most fleet management software systems charge a yearly fee. This yearly update should provide you with an upgraded system and benefits, not simply the license renewal. Ask the vendor what the yearly fee will get you.

## **How RTA Can Help You Discover the Right Management Software for Your Fleet**

Ron Turley had one of the first authoritative voices in the fleet industry, and his influence continues today in many ways. Before founding RTA in 1979, Ron saved UPS nearly \$100 million in vehicle costs during five years as their national director of maintenance. Adjusted for inflation, that figure would be more than \$300 million today.

RTA fleet management software takes the best practices that Ron developed during his time with UPS and makes them available to fleet managers everywhere. It improves productivity through attention to details and data.

Those same best practices are at the heart of RTA's newest initiative called [Fleet University](#), a program designed to improve fleet management around the world. Fleet University is the home of free, valuable resources to make fleet management more productive, regardless of what software a fleet uses.

We invite you to [request a demo of RTA fleet management software](#), and visit [Fleet University](#) often for free resources to save time and money.