



Hydro's fleet services

Driving towards the future

By Tonia Jurbin, P.Eng

Over 35 years old and totaling more than 3,000 vehicles, BC Hydro's Fleet Services is a sophisticated, total service, province-wide leasing operation. About three-quarters of the fleet are light-duty cars and trucks. The rest are of heavy-duty trucks outfitted with aerial devices, digger derricks, folding and stiff boom cranes.

The company made a major move about 10 years ago and started working with external fleets, such as BC Gas. Today, 1,000 vehicles are leased from Fleet Services, and the rest are used internally. This year, two new Toyota Hybrid vehicles joined the fleet.

"We operate like an in-house rental company except that we are able to provide a wider range of services," says Tris White, manager of Fleet Services. "We try to meet the customer's expectations by providing quality service and adding value. Our safety record is outstanding and our customers trust our fleet."

Fleet Services has a workforce of 109 including support staff, and 81 mechanics located

throughout the province to maintain the fleet. About 30 to 35 per cent of the work is contracted out to local specialty outfits for glass repairs, springs, mufflers and other routine maintenance procedures. Fleet Services also uses and pays for the services of other BC Hydro departments for computer support, building maintenance and software development.

"Managing a fleet of vehicles is not like managing your own vehicle. The level of analysis is much more involved in the way we purchase, outfit and maintain vehicles, train staff, select suppliers and contract services. Our biggest challenge is to meet customer expectations that differ from one customer to the next," says White.

"While most managers value the lowest cost, for others the priority is to increase productivity or reduce downtime. Some are after the quality of our outfitting services while others want maximum availability, or speed of availability. We also have to consider that the driver could have different expectations than their managers," he adds. "For

example, a driver may want a special piece of equipment that a manager doesn't want to pay for. We help to define the middle ground and we add value by helping our customers meet their goals."

The goal of Fleet Services is to achieve an 80 per cent or better approval rating in customer surveys. Their first survey in the year 2000 indicated a 60 per cent approval rating.

Services offered by the group cover a complete range including tendering, engineering, managing working and outfitting vehicles with special wiring, work stations, binning systems and winches.

So what's in store for the future?

Overall, Fleet Services is not planning to expand or increase their market share. "By maintaining other fleets (like BC Gas) we reduced our overhead and maximize our productivity," says Tris. 🐾

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