



City of Seattle Takes FOG Program Online, Improving Remote Access & Customer Compliance

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-Gary Christiansen

Program Supervisor
Wastewater Source Control Program
Seattle Public Utilities

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About Seattle Public Utilities


With more than 5,000 restaurants and Food Service Establishments (FSEs) in Seattle, the City’s Fats Oils and Grease (FOG) program is vital to protecting community health and keeping sewers flowing by preventing unlawful discharges from entering the system. With a team of five inspectors and one program supervisor responsible for a large program, Gary Christiansen, Program Supervisor for the Wastewater Source Control Program (WSCP) at Seattle Public Utilities, needs to optimize on efficiencies wherever possible.

The Challenge

“The reality is our small team is not able to inspect every Food Service Establishment (FSE) immediately; our success depends on identifying problem areas and prioritizing establishments that require the greatest attention. Our overarching goal is to create a data-driven vs. an effort-driven program in order to serve the City of Seattle in a cost effective and efficient manner,” said Christiansen.

The Solution – FOG Software Digitizing Data Entry

For a little over 15 years, the City has used the FOG software from Aquatic Informatics, a software program that tracks data from FSEs. Christiansen had a vision to further improve data accessibility and streamline processes by taking the whole program online. “Cloud native applications enable our inspectors to access all of our facility



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information from the office, in the field, and in the current COVID-19-work environment – from their homes utilizing a laptop or tablet, even their smartphones. We have already experienced the efficiencies of integrating previously-siloed data between the FOG and GIS systems. The first step to taking the program online was to optimize the digitization of processes. Next we intend to move to online maintenance reporting,” said Christiansen.

Moving Online

With digitized processes in place, moving the City’s FOG program online has several advantages. Being accessible through a browser, it can now be used on any connected mobile device or computer. The look, feel and function of the software remains consistent, making it easier to use and access the entire suite of FOG software from anywhere. “The uniformity that comes along with a cloud application makes it a lot more efficient and gives us flexibility for the future as the city grows,” said Christiansen.

Fostering Partnerships with FSEs

Once an inspection has been completed, inspectors can easily email a copy of the completed inspection form to the FSE. Previously, the recipient of the inspection report received a copy of the paper form along with an inspector’s business card. The form included handwritten comments about what

corrective actions needed to be taken, which weren’t always clearly stated and required subsequent follow-up visits to ensure action was taken. Now, a report is emailed directly to the FSE with specific corrective action information. From a compliance perspective, this helps ensure all parties clearly understand the City’s expectations. This has helped the City dramatically improve relationships with FSEs.

The City can now receive an email with pictures when something is cleaned or corrected, meaning that staff don’t need to go back to the establishment to verify the problem is fixed.

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DOC040.53.10210.Dec20

Results

- Optimization of existing workflows
- Digitization of data entry & access from the field
- Strengthened partnerships with FSEs

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Book a discovery call to discuss how we can meet your water data management needs.

Hach Flow
1.800.368.2723 | +1.970.622.7120
hachflowsales@hach.com
hach.com/flow

