



# Minorplanet Walker Fire Case Study

## Walker Fire

Established in 1945, Walker Fire started as a small family business. It now operates in the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands, and has grown to be one of the largest suppliers of fire-fighting equipment in the UK.

The purpose-built manufacturing plant is fully commissioned for producing fire extinguishers, fire hoses, hose reels, cabinets, foam-making equipment and ancillaries to meet the ever increasing demand from domestic and world markets.

Covering the whole of the UK from the head office in Preston and 4 regional offices, the company has a fleet of more than 60 vehicles, including 6 vehicles in Ireland.

Walker Fire first installed Minorplanet's telematics system in 2002, after the system in place at the time did not meet their requirements. This was compounded by the relocation of their service centre to South Africa.

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Pauline Cathcart

After researching the telematics market, Walker's Managing Director, David Cosgrove, examined 6 to 8 different systems more closely.

As well as a full range of vehicle tracking and management functionality, the need for street level mapping in Ireland was a particular requirement. Minorplanet's VMI™ system was able to deliver the best solution.

The implementation of the system went very smoothly. They had some initial resistance from their engineers, but keeping them informed throughout the process eased the situation.

Walker Fire was one of the first customers to upgrade their system to GPRS. This provided them with true, real-time tracking for each vehicle at that instant, removing the need to refer to reports for journey details.

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Pauline Cathcart, user of the system, has been impressed with the quality and content of the reports created from VMI™: “The playback and snail trail features are particularly useful. Not only can I view a day’s progress, but I can use the trail, and print, to show our engineers routes. This is a great help to me in areas where I am not so familiar with, for example, in Scotland”.

The VMI™ system is put to use, not only to monitor the whereabouts of engineers and to check their attendance at site, but also to provide assistance to them.

“Engineers often ring up when they are lost or unable to find a customer, so I can use the extensive mapping within the system to direct them to their destination”, continued Pauline. The system is also used to improve customer service and maximise efficiency.

“For example”, said Pauline, “one of our lads rang up from a customer’s site in Blackpool needing 2 fire extinguishers. Unfortunately, he had run out of his own supplies,

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but we used the system to find another driver in the same area, who happened to be only 2 streets away, who could deliver the extinguishers there and then. This saved us both time and money. Without the system, our driver would have had to return to base to collect new extinguishers then make another trip to the customer to deliver them.”

VMI’s live tracking also enables Walker Fire to respond to emergency call-out more quickly. “When a customer rings up, with their fire alarm going-off, we can identify the nearest engineer and send him straight to site.”

Her strong local knowledge together with the minute-by-minute tracking, has enabled Pauline to put a stop to any vehicle misuse. Private mileage is allowed, but with the system in place drivers tend not to abuse the privilege.

“These are just a few examples of how VMI™ has helped Walker Fire save money and become more efficient”, concluded Pauline.