



eBook

The Complete Guide to Preventive Maintenance for Refuse Fleets

Refuse trucks live a tough life so they need to be durable and functional. They hit the road in the early hours of the morning and must maintain tight routes. Along the way they go through constant stops, starts, lifts, and compaction cycles.

It is imperative that you maintain your fleet so your trucks stay on the road every morning like clockwork.

If you only fix things when they break, they'll break at the worst time such as on a route, in traffic, with a hopper full and a schedule behind. Preventative maintenance flips that script. It keeps trucks safe, keeps crews moving, and keeps your promises to customers.



In this eBook, we'll show how a simple, consistent PM program lowers risk and cost. We'll talk about the real price of downtime such as lost productivity, missed pickups, safety hazards, and unhappy municipalities or commercial accounts. Plus, we'll explain how following OEM standards, combined with Ten-8 Industrial's service approach, extends the life of your assets and protects your budget.

If you're running a fleet, you don't need more theory but you need something that actually works in real life. You need a plan that fits your trucks, your routes, and your people. That's what this guide delivers.

Why Preventative Maintenance Matters in the Refuse Industry

Refuse work loads every system hard. Everything is impacted such as hydraulics, electrical, brakes, packers, and bodies. Small problems start to grow into big ones (even huge ones).

Small issues snowball fast such as the following as examples:



A chafed hydraulic hose becomes a burst line.



A weak battery becomes a no-start call at 4:30 a.m.



A loose pivot turns into structural damage.

Preventative maintenance catches the “almost” moments before they turn into service calls, injuries, and expensive rebuilds.

Ultimately, catching problems early protects your reputation, ensures your staff is satisfied, and your customers are happy.

The Cost of Downtime: Safety Risks, Operational Delays, and Customer Impact

Downtime is never just a truck cost. It's a chain reaction that can often lead to staggeringly high bills:

- **Safety:** Stuck on the shoulder with a compactor issue? Without a doubt, your crew is exposed. Fluid leaks create slip hazards that could put your crew in the hospital or at least out of work with an injury. Braking issues risk collisions which can lead to injuries and even lawsuits.
- **Operations:** Missed lifts push work to the next shift, stack up overtime, and blow up your route plan so everything becomes a confusing and costly mess. When a front loader or side loader is down, you shuffle assets and hope nothing else goes wrong but things can go wrong so you have to be ready.
- **Customer Impact:** Missed commercial pickups mean odor, pests, and complaints from your customers. Municipal contracts often carry penalties which can be stiff. Not to mention, word travels which can seriously impact your brand.

A single out-of-service day can cost more than a month of planned maintenance. It's that simple and can become that costly.





How OEM Standards + Ten-8 Industrial Service Create Long-Term Value

OEM schedules are the baseline that you'll want to follow every step of the way. They're built from millions of duty-cycle hours and warranty data. However, please remember that no two fleets are identical.



Ten-8 Industrial blends OEM guidance with your route's reality. The factors that we examine include stop density, climate, crew habits, and truck mix. Trust us, we align intervals, choose the right fluids and filters, and set inspection routines that actually fit your day. That combination locks in reliability and protects residual value.

Building a Preventative Maintenance Program

A good program is predictable, visible, and easy to follow. We suggest that you start with clear service tiers and real accountability.



Daily, Weekly, Monthly, and Annual PM Schedules

- **Daily:** Operator walkarounds and start-up checks. Top-offs, obvious leaks, lights, safety gear, hopper/packer **function**.
- **Weekly:** Deeper inspections that focus on things like lubrication, visual hydraulic checks, battery tests, brake wear, electrical connectors.
- **Monthly:** Filters, fluid sampling, torque checks, packer wear points, CAN-bus fault review, body hardware, door seals.
- **Quarterly/Annual:** Full diagnostics, hydraulic flushes as needed, cooling system service, suspension/steering, structural inspections of body and chassis.

Balancing OEM Guidelines with Fleet-Specific Needs

Run mostly downtown commercial routes with constant stop-start? Your brakes and hydraulics need tighter intervals than a suburban residential mix. Hot climate? Batteries, cooling, and hydraulic fluid life change. We map your duty cycle against OEM intervals and adjust for reality, not a lab.

Tracking and Documentation Best Practices

Documentation isn't simply paperwork.. It's actually your proof and your memory that you can use a day, six months, or a year out. Ideally, you should use consistent forms, VIN-linked work orders, and photo capture of issues. You also want to stay organized so keep track of asset numbers, not just license plates. And make it easy for operators, simple checklists, fast defect reporting, and quick feedback when they flag a problem. When everyone can see the data, everyone plays their part.





Daily Inspections & Operator Care

Operators are your first line of defense and can save you a bundle. Five extra minutes at start-up saves hours later which is a win-win for everyone involved.

Walkaround Focus Areas

Look at what fails first in refuse trucks: tires, fluids, lights, hydraulics, and the hopper/packer.

Check tread and sidewalls, top off DEF and oil, confirm headlamps and strobes, scan for leaks at hoses and fittings, and cycle the packer for smooth travel and abnormal noises. If something feels off, it usually is.

Spot Early Warning Signs

Okay, if you are wondering how to handle things then you need to know the warning signs. Below are just a few examples that people run into. However, they do show the need to stay on your toes and watch for the warning signs before they become something big.

- Burnt smell near a battery? Don't shrug it off but go a step further.
- A damp sheen on a hose? That seep is a future burst that can put a truck off the road.
- Slow packer return? That's friction or hydraulic aeration which can also stall a key truck in your fleet.
- Slight pull under braking? Address it before it becomes a tow or worse, something that poses a serious safety hazard to your crew and the public. .

How Operators Extend Equipment Life

- Clean debris from pivot points.
- Report small leaks immediately.
- Respect warm-up times.
- Don't "slam" controls to fix a sticking cylinder—report it.

The operator's daily habits protect the most expensive parts on the truck.

Utilize Integrated ClearSky Telematics

Pair eyes-on checks with data.

ClearSky telematics (from McNeilus) plugs into electrical and hydraulic systems so you can:



Receive real-time alerts for fault codes and abnormal behavior



Monitor and record live vehicle performance



See patterns that human eyes miss such as heat, voltage, pressure, duty-cycle anomalies



Weekly & Monthly Service Routines

This is where most fleets either build reliability—or chase it.



Lubrication for Loaders and Packers

Grease the right fittings at the right interval. Focus on arms, slides, packer pivots, and tailgate hinges. Clean first, then lube. Contamination ruins bushings and pins faster than any “heavy use.”

Hydraulic System Care

Inspect hose routing and clamps. Look for chafe points and shiny rub marks. Replace suspect hoses before they fail. Follow OEM fluid specs and keep a strict filter calendar. If you sample fluids monthly, you’ll spot wear metals and oxidation early.

Brake System Checks

Measure pad/shoe thickness, inspect drums/rotors, confirm proper air system function, and test park brake hold on a grade. City work is brutal on brakes—don’t stretch intervals.

Electrical & Battery Inspections

Check grounds, harnesses near pinch points, and connectors for corrosion. Load-test batteries and clean terminals. Many “mystery” hydraulic issues start as low voltage.

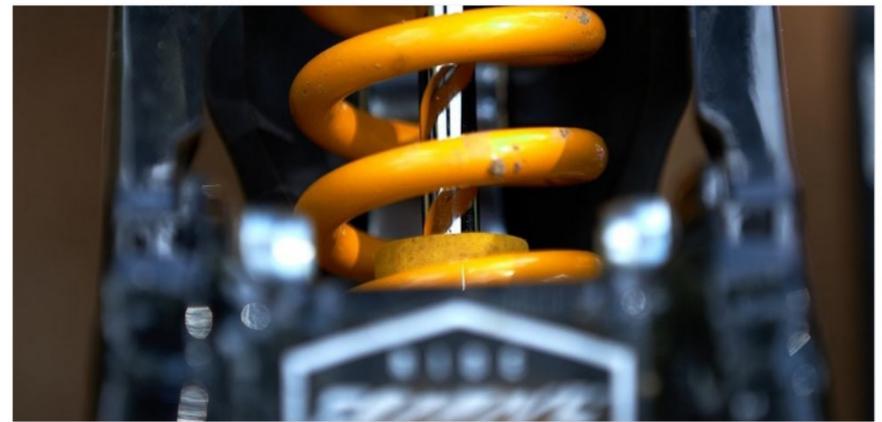
Quarterly & Annual Maintenance Essentials

Bigger intervals, bigger wins.



Engine Diagnostics & Cooling Service

Run full scans, verify software updates, and check sensor health. Cooling system service such as pressure test, inspect hoses, flush on schedule, protects your engine and hydraulic performance.



Suspension and Steering

Look for cracked bushings, loose U-bolts, worn kingpins, and play in tie rods. A loose front end beats up tires, frames, and drivers.



Full Hydraulic Flashes & Component Replacements

Follow OEM guidance on flush intervals, especially for high-heat routes. Replace high-cycle wear parts on a schedule. It's cheaper to plan a two-hour swap than to lose a truck at 6 a.m.



Body & Chassis Reinforcement Checks

Inspect welds, rails, crossmembers, and packer floors for cracks or deformation. Address small cracks immediately —structural issues compound fast on refuse bodies.





Leveraging Technology for Smarter Maintenance

Tech doesn't replace your people. It makes them faster and more accurate



McNeilus IFM Pad Diagnostics

The IFM Pad is a powerful diagnostic tool that shortens troubleshooting time. You can see live values, calibrate components, and confirm fixes. Early detection means you replace the \$50 part today instead of the \$5,000 assembly next month.



CAN-bus Monitoring & Real-Time Fault Codes

When you watch CAN-bus data, you catch intermittent faults that never show up in the bay. Voltage dips, sensor spikes, actuator lag—these are the breadcrumbs that lead to real fixes.



ClearSky Telematics for Live Performance

Tie your diagnostics to ClearSky telematics. Get alerts in real time, integrate with your maintenance system, and create a real history for each VIN.

Over time, patterns pop: which routes cause heat, which operators trigger repeated faults, which trucks need an interval tweak.



Telematics & Fleet Management Tools

The goal isn't more data—it's fewer surprises. Use telematics to trigger PMs, prioritize repairs, and prove uptime to stakeholders. If a truck throws the same low-pressure fault every Friday on Route 12, you'll know why—and fix the root cause.



Parts Management & OEM Advantages

Parts strategy is uptime strategy.



Why OEM Parts Outlast Aftermarket

OEM components are engineered for the specific heat, pressure, and shock cycles of refuse duty. They fit right, seal right, and last longer. Aftermarket might be cheaper on paper, but repeat failures, extra labor, and collateral damage erase any “savings.”



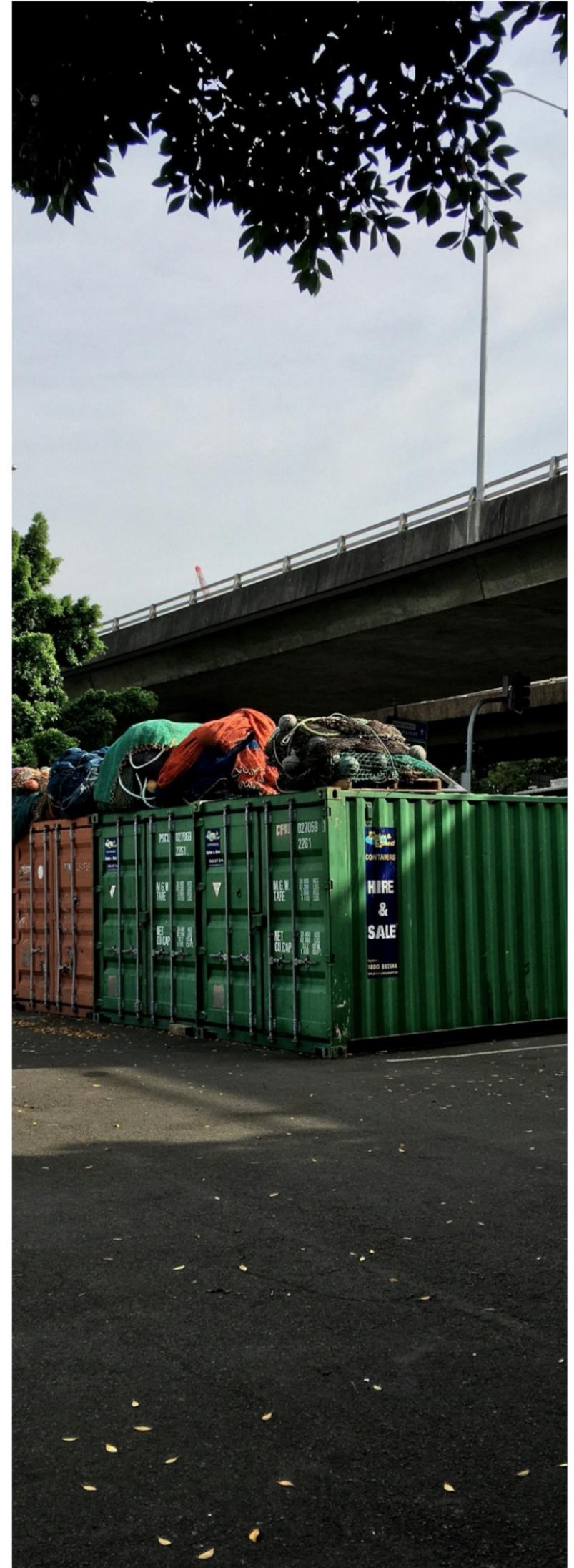
Inventory Strategies That Reduce Downtime

Stock the fast movers: filters, hoses sized by truck family, sensors, pins/bushings, wear pads, and electrical connectors. Keep a small “hot shelf” for common route-killers. Use historical data to set your min/max. If it strands a truck, it belongs in your cabinet.



How Ten-8's Parts Team Helps

We match your fleet profile to a smart stock plan, stage kits for upcoming PMs, and turn special orders fast. One call, correct part, on time. That's how you keep trucks on route.





Mobile Service & Emergency Support

You won't win every battle in the shop. Sometimes the fix has to meet the truck.



Field Repairs vs. In-Shop Work

Field service keeps you on schedule when the issue is contained such as hoses, sensors, fittings, battery swaps, simple electrical repairs. In-shop is better for diagnostics, structural work, and anything that needs a lift or controlled environment. We help you choose the right path quickly so you don't burn hours deciding.



When to Call Mobile Service

If a truck is safe to move and the repair will hold, bring it in. If it's stranded, leaking, or throwing critical faults, call mobile. The earlier you call, the faster we can stage parts and get you back up.



Real Downtime Wins with Ten-8 Industrial

We've seen a chafed return line fixed in-field within an hour, saving a full commercial morning. We've caught failing batteries on a Friday with IFM checks and avoided a three-truck pile-up of no-starts on Monday. These are small, everyday wins that add up to real uptime.

Training & Safety Integration

A PM program only works if people know what “good” looks like.



Operator & Technician Training

Teach operators what to look for and what to report so they can keep their trucks on the road. Teach techs how to use IFM and read CAN-bus data so they can diagnose, not guess. Hands-on, short sessions beat long slide decks every time.



NFPA, OSHA, and EPA Considerations

Safety standards aren't an add-on; they're baked into smart maintenance and an undeniable must-have. Guard pinch points. Lockout/tagout properly. Handle fluids responsibly. Document your steps. It protects people and keeps the regulators off your back.



Build a Culture of Preventative Maintenance

Celebrate clean inspections because they mean you're doing something right. Close the loop on operator reports so crews see their voice matters. Share wins, such as “this catch avoided a road call.” When the whole team believes the PM protects them and their routes, compliance becomes natural.



Cost Savings & ROI of Preventative Maintenance



Let's talk dollars.



Reactive vs. Proactive Costs

A blown hose on route: tow + cleanup + parts + labor + missed pickups. A planned hose replacement: parts + one hour in the bay. Multiply that difference across a fleet and a year. That's your ROI.



Fuel, Lifespan, and Repair Bills

Proper lubrication, aligned steering, and healthy hydraulics reduce drag and heat. Less heat equals longer component life and fewer catastrophic failures. Your trucks last longer. Your fuel spend shrinks. Your repair bills get boring.



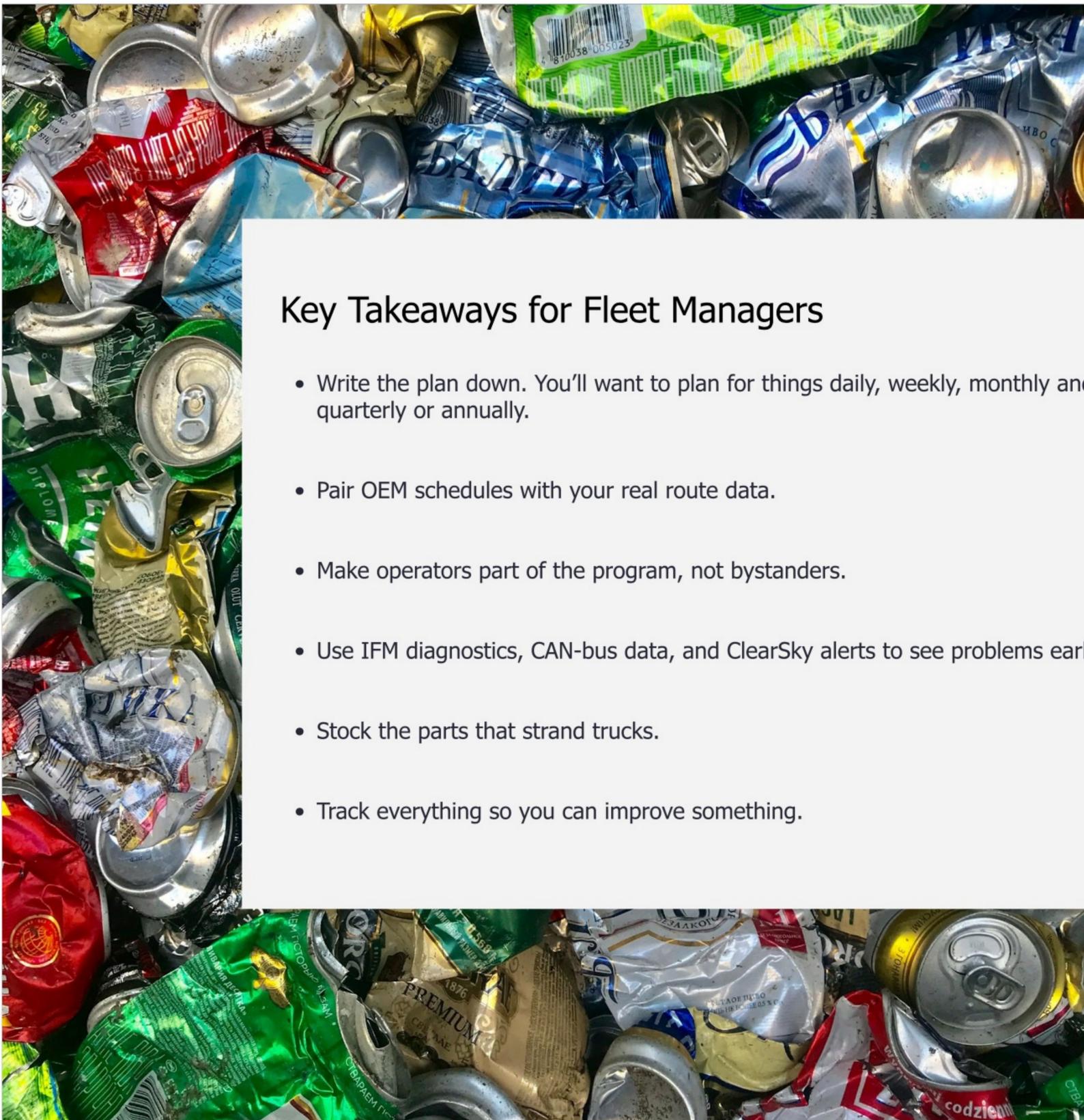
Real-World ROI Snapshot

One fleet tightened its brake and hydraulic intervals based on telematics heat data. Road calls dropped by 38% in six months. Overtime fell with it. The PM budget went up a little. The total maintenance cost went down a lot. That's the math of doing it right.

Conclusion & Next Steps

Preventative maintenance isn't glamorous, but it's powerful and necessary. When your daily checks are real, your weekly/monthly routines are consistent, your quarterly/annual service is scheduled, and your tech tools are actually used, uptime follows and you end up saving money in the long run.

Not to mention, your crews stay safe, your routes stay on time and your customer base remains happy. Those are big wins.



Key Takeaways for Fleet Managers

- Write the plan down. You'll want to plan for things daily, weekly, monthly and even quarterly or annually.
- Pair OEM schedules with your real route data.
- Make operators part of the program, not bystanders.
- Use IFM diagnostics, CAN-bus data, and ClearSky alerts to see problems early.
- Stock the parts that strand trucks.
- Track everything so you can improve something.

How Ten-8 Industrial Can Help

Wondering how Ten-8 can help? We can build your PM plan, tune intervals to your routes, train operators and techs, integrate diagnostics and telematics, and supply the OEM parts that keep trucks on the road. It doesn't matter whether you need a one-time audit, ongoing PM support, or a mobile save on a rough morning, we're here to help you every step of the way.

Ready to cut road calls and boost uptime? [Schedule a service consultation](#) with Ten-8 Industrial or [download our daily checklist](#) to get your program rolling today.

