



A CASE STUDY

How Fox Chapel Authority Improves Management of PA-1 Calls



After reading the series of articles describing 1MARK™, a web-based dig ticket management software product in *The Authority* magazine, Fox Chapel Authority (FCA) decided to try it. Now, after using it for over six months, this article describes why FCA tried 1MARK™, its experience with the implementation process and why the authority is happy with the results.

ABOUT FOX CHAPEL AUTHORITY

FCA was incorporated on September 23, 1938. It was created by Fox Chapel Borough and the Townships of Harmar, Indiana, and O'Hara in accordance with the Pennsylvania Municipality Authorities Act. It currently serves an area of approximately 15 square miles with 5,500 customers or a population of approximately 18,500 people. It provides water service to all of Fox Chapel Borough, approximately two thirds of O'Hara Township, and 15% each of Harmar and Indiana Townships. It also provides bulk water sales to Blawnox Borough and parts of Aspinwall Borough.

FCA's distribution system is comprised of approximately 113 miles of pipe ranging in size from 2" to 16" in diameter.

THE PROBLEM

In order to provide the best possible customer service, FCA is always searching for new technologies to improve how it does business. The articles about 1MARK™ caught the attention of both FCA's Technology and Operations teams since it purported to be software that could streamline the management of its dig tickets and allow the field techs to document all their marking with photos that can be easily recalled if issues arise in the future.

"Documenting our 1-Call markings was certainly an area of our business that we knew could be potentially improved, especially since the new PA 1-Call law

went into effect in April.” explains Mark Nicely, Fox Chapel’s Manager.

Many of the problems that 1MARK™ purported to solve that were described in the articles were applicable to FCA. Some of these problems included: tracking the numerous emails received from POCS; timely getting the dig ticket to the field staff, including emergency tickets; verifying that the dig ticket was cleared; storing all information associated with the dig ticket including description, attachments, notes, time entries, pictures and video in one place; and having the ability to search and retrieve all information when needed.

“Additionally, we were very interested in giving our field marking staff access to our GIS mapping to assist them in their daily work. 1MARK™ proposed to combine our 1-Call dig box and GIS map layers so staff could have both on the same screen of their mobile device,” explains Rich Sikon, Fox Chapel’s Technology Supervisor.

But, as with any new software technology, FCA wanted to determine whether it really would increase efficiency, reduce cost, and be as easy-to-use, as it was so described. In other words, FCA wondering whether 1MARK™ would deliver on its 811 Base Module’s tagline of “...1MARK™ picks up where web ticket entry leaves off.”

Therefore, the 30-day free trial seemed a good way to try it out.

THE IMPLEMENTATION

Overall, the implementation process was remarkably easy and quick. It involved three steps.

Step 1: Training.

First, we arranged a 30-minute WebEx training session for field tech and supervisors. This 30 minutes included a demonstration and still left plenty of time for questions and answers.



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A definite plus in training is that the software application has large, easy-to-use icons. In other words, the screen was pretty self-explanatory.

Step 2: Conversion.

Second, FCA converted from email to 1MARK™. This step was easy. All it took was a quick telephone call with the POCS.

Step 3: Upload GIS files.

Third, FCA’s GIS shapefiles were uploaded by 1MARK™ to populate the Google maps with FCA’s underground infrastructure.

LIVE

That’s it. FCA was live and rolling. And, along our 30-day trial period, FCA made a few suggestions for additions to the functionality of the product to suit FCA’s particular needs. These suggestions were incorporated into the software by the 1MARK™ staff.

THE RESULTS

“We like it,” states Rich Sikon. Spe-

cifically, the advantages FCA saw from using email to this software product include:

- **Pictures/Video**

As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. FCA now documents all of its 1Call markings with pictures and videos. After FCA field mark the site, they document it by taking site pictures and videos on android tablets. Then, the field staff uploads the photo documentation with the dig ticket documentation with the selected response. Since all documentation is stored electronically with the dig ticket, no need for the field technician to go back to the office, download the pictures and create another file.

Recently, this documentation has proven very valuable to FCA when a new contractor arrived in town and hit FCA’s facilities nine (9) times over a short period of time. The photographic documentation that was stored with the dig tickets was vital in assisting FCA in establishing that its markings were accurate.

And, this documentation would put FCA in a position to recover damages from the responsible party. Further, FCA's documentation was able to be easily uploaded when we were preparing our Alleged Violation Reports (AVR) for the newly established Damage Prevention Committee of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission.

- **GIS Mapping**

FCA's GIS mapping layers are now in the hands of its field staff for use in marking its facilities. Additionally, overlaying the 1Call dig box and FCA's GIS mapping onto Google Maps allows FCA to quickly evaluate if tickets can be cleared if we have no facilities in the area.

Rich explains, "The ability to overlay our GIS pipe feature layers in 1MARK™ makes it easier to identify exact PA One Call ticket locations. For some tickets we can immediately respond with "Clear – no facilities" based upon the ticket map location in relation to our system of pipes."

- **Efficiency**

FCA, like most water authorities, is always finding ways to do more with less and the right software technology can help. FCA says that by automating its One Call process and going paperless, it has seen efficiencies in the following ways.

- **Inbound dig tickets.**

Going paperless will eliminate 1,400 manual work orders per year. "New PA One Call tickets appear in the 1MARK™ inbox and the work crew members can access these with a tablet PC." No more printing or forwarding the email to the assigned crew member.

- **Management of dig tickets.**

On-call responsibilities rotate amongst FCA's Supervisors. "With 1MARK™, all PA One Call emergency tickets are sent out immediately via a phone text



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message to the person on-call. This ensures that these high importance tickets are not missed and can be acted upon quickly," says Rich.

- **Storage of dig ticket information.**

All pertinent PA One Call information, including response codes, photos and videos, reside within 1MARK™ cloud storage and can be easily retrieved by searching closed tickets."

- **Less administrative time.**

Going paperless has freed up personnel from the time-consuming paperwork process of tracking, documenting and archiving 1Call tickets. This includes both our office personnel, who process the ticket to the crew members, who document the ticket.

CONCLUSION

Getting employees on board with new software technology can be challenging. FCA, like most authorities, asked itself, "do we continue business as usual or do we change?" Why?

According to Rich Sikon, "The answer to this question is simple: Because 1MARK™ is worth it. Our Management team recognized that the One Call process was something in great need of some modern technology. This software provides all the tools needed to process our One Call tickets and we are able to put our GIS mapping layers in the hands of our field staff."

"During our first six months of using this product we were able to utilize the documentation capabilities to prove damages for several incidents that occurred by contractors doing work in our service area. From the start, the FCA's staff has been very diligent of documenting every one of our One Call marking with photographs. Our documentation efforts assist our Authority not only with compliance with the new PA One Call Law."

www.1mark.org



1MARK™ really does pick up where Web Ticket Entry leaves off. This cloud-based software has met our expectations to streamline our 1-Call ticket process and given us the capability to efficiently document all of our field markings.

Evaluation and use of this product - we were interested if paying for the **1MARK™** service was worth the cost versus receiving tickets via email from the PA One Call System. FCA pays \$150/month for this service and we have determined that this cost is worth the benefits that we receive.

---Rich Sikon, Fox Chapel Authority

About **1MARK™**

An endorsed member program that provides a One Call Ticket Management Solution for the Damage Prevention Industry, including Authorities, a low-cost, monthly subscription option to connect the front office with the staff in the field for a seamless flow of information accessible on any web browser, tablet or smartphone. This web-based software platform processes and manages PA One Call Tickets, includes a complete work order system tailored to the water and wastewater industry and provides a solution for transmitting all of your important geo-located information to field staff superimposed onto Google® Maps for viewing of your GIS mapping, field measurements and all of your Record Drawings.

For more information about **1MARK™**, or to arrange a demonstration of the program, please visit PMAA's website and find us under the Endorsed Member Programs section.



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