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Interview with Veolia Environmental Services fleet maintenance manager, Christopher Smith

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“Surpassed our expectations!” says Christopher Smith, fleet maintenance manager at Veolia Environmental Services when asked to describe the Zeon Digital network.

One of the leading companies in the waste management industry, Veolia, formerly known as Collex, is a top 500 company in Australia employing 3500 people Australia wide with an annual turnover of \$600 million.

The company has a number of divisions, amongst which is the waste and recyclables collection for which Councils issue tenders. Three of the contracts Veolia has for waste and recyclables are Hornsby, Kuringai and Waringah Councils in metropolitan New South Wales.

Smith recalls, “The main issue we faced with our trucks in the Hornsby area, on the Sydney outer fringe, was reception. Because a lot of our operational areas are hilly with lots of ravines, we encountered many dead spots leading on some occasions to as little as 25% coverage. This has now been boosted to around 100%.”

There are also many high rise buildings in the area which can have a deleterious effect on audio quality. Chris says it is critical that messages get through clearly from truck to truck, base to truck and vice versa; Veolia needed a massive improvement in communications coverage.

“Reception has to be better than good. There’s a lot of traffic on the network because of trucks talking to each other as well as back to base. If, for example, we have new drivers and they miss a bin or occasionally a whole street, we need spot-on truck to truck communication. The trucks that follow to pick up say, the recyclables, can communicate with the garbage truck to let them know they’ve missed a street so we can easily rectify the oversight,” says Chris.

As one of Australia’s foremost advocates for the establishment of safe work practices, occupational health and safety is another area of concern for Veolia. If a driver has an accident, he needs to know he can summon help quickly.

“The truck might blow a tyre or have a mechanical fault. We need to be able to contact operations immediately. We can’t rely on knocking on people’s doors or using a mobile phone. Mobile reception in these areas is sometimes uncertain,” states Chris.

“Everyone from management through to the end user has been ecstatic about the boost to communications. The radio’s caller ID feature also means we can identify any misuse of radios and counsel the drivers involved. There is far greater control of the communications. We couldn’t really operate day to day without it,” says Chris.

The success of the Hornsby system led Veolia to install Zeon Digital to support their contracts with the Kuringai and Waringah Shire Councils. The results have been excellent and the Councils are also impressed with better service due to Veolia’s improved communications. All three Council systems up and running involve around 100 users.

Chris comments that while most people are wary of change, great reception and clarity of voice has converted everyone to enthusiastic users of Zeon Digital.

Why two-way radio?

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Why Zeon Digital?

“A lot of our operational areas are really hilly with lots of ravines and many dead spots. Zeon Digital has boosted coverage to around 100%, a fourfold increase.”



Veolia Environmental Services use Zeon Digital radios across greater metropolitan Sydney.

