

## Case Study:

# DeLea Sod Farms Improves Driver Safety, Operational Efficiency and Customer Experience



**Client Since: 2013**

**Industry: Landscape Materials**

**Assets with IntelliShift: 134**

New York-based DeLea Sod Farms is a fourth-generation family business. It operates across the tri-state area and serves a diverse customer base, supplying materials for projects ranging from residential landscapes to large commercial settings – including professional athletic fields, golf courses and parks, as well as stocking home improvement retailers.

On any given day, the company runs 25-30 sod delivery trucks, plus vehicles for farm pickups and dump trucks for delivering materials like topsoil, sand and gravel. With a demanding daily schedule, keeping drivers safe while maintaining high marks for on-time deliveries and top-quality product is critical to success.

Before adopting IntelliShift, DeLea Sod Farms Operations Manager John Conover lacked the end-to-end operational visibility needed to ensure driver safety and optimize workflows. Deploying IntelliShift’s dual-facing, in-cab video and telematics with real-time GPS tracking was the solution.

## Challenges:

Lack of visibility into on-the-road driver behavior made it impossible to ensure safe practices or accurately respond to driving complaints received from motorists.

Faced with rising insurance premiums and a coming mandate by its insurance provider to deploy dual-facing, in-cab video.

A demanding delivery schedule and perishable product required excessive communication between drivers, dispatch and sales.

## Goals:

Gain video evidence to provide context for safety incidents, either proving exoneration or giving the insight needed for effective driver coaching.

Improve driver safety and performance while lowering insurance costs.

Eliminate the need for constant phone status checks with drivers, optimize route efficiency and on-time delivery.

## Life with IntelliShift

Maintaining a fleet of vehicles is a necessary part of the business, but DeLea Sod Farms sees itself as a grower and a service provider, not a trucking company. Automating and optimizing fleet-related operations so it can focus on the core business is critical – especially since it runs with lean staff resources.

## In-Cab Video Reduces Insurance Costs and Improves Driver Safety

Initially, DeLea Sod Farms deployed IntelliShift's dual-facing video to comply with an upcoming mandate from its insurance provider, and to take advantage of a reduction in insurance premiums. Once installed, however, it gained a host of additional benefits.

Due to the proliferation of cell phones, the company was receiving a small number of calls from motorists who made driving complaints against its vehicles. Without full context of what happened on the roadway, it was impossible to determine the facts around these incidents – to either exonerate the driver or take corrective action.

After the camera installation, John Conover discovered that in many cases the company's drivers weren't at fault. "A lot of times we find that the passenger vehicle wants to get in front of the truck, or doesn't want to be next to it, and they get very aggressive," said John. The irrefutable camera and telematics evidence now protects drivers – and the business – from false claims.

## Insight for Targeted Driver Coaching and Training

When incident video shows a driver at fault – either distracted or operating the vehicle in a risky manner – John has the insight needed to take action with effective coaching.

In addition to responding to call-in complaints, the video is regularly matched up with timestamped alerts for events like harsh braking or turning to determine if road conditions forced the response or if a pattern of behavior needs to be addressed.

## Exonerate Drivers From Accident Liability

In the case of an accident, the video exonerates drivers if they're not at fault. When one of DeLea Sod Farms drivers lost control on the interstate, his truck slammed into a wall. There was light rain in the area, but no obvious external causes for the accident.

Fortunately, the dual-facing video proved the driver wasn't speeding, distracted or making any risky moves. "It exonerated the driver. We watched the video over and over," said John. "He was minding his own business. You wouldn't have believed it unless you saw the video."

## Real-time Tracking to Ensure Product Quality Through Efficient Delivery

Since sod is a perishable product, fast and efficient delivery is required to maintain high quality. Adding to the complexity, work crews are ready and waiting to install the sod and everyone wants delivery early in the morning – especially during the summer months.

Keeping schedules on track, and customers informed with accurate delivery windows, used to mean constant calls to get status updates from each driver. The back-and-forth communication drained productivity across the team.

IntelliShift's real-time GPS and ETA functionality streamlined delivery and communication workflows, giving the entire DeLea Sod Farms team an at-a-glance view to monitor the precise status of each delivery route. It also enables dispatch to reroute vehicles in the moment, to optimize time and mileage.

"Almost everyone from dispatch to sales is looking at the GPS all day long and seeing where the trucks are, the next stop, if there's traffic – it's a big, big help," said John. Customers get fast, accurate updates and drivers have gotten much-needed relief from the nonstop call interruptions.

## Responsive Support Ensures Success

"IntelliShift is easy to use, and the support staff is terrific. If we have an issue, I shoot an email and usually get a call back within ten minutes, sometimes even less. And they can be here the same day or the following day. Support is Grade A," John said.

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– John Conover, Operations Manager, DeLea Sod Farms

Reduction in insurance premiums

**13%**

lower liability cost

**10%**

lower comprehensive cost

**75%**

of driving complaints exonerated

**12-15** hours per week

time saved tracking and communicating delivery schedules