

AssetWORKS

INDUSTRY

SPOTLIGHT

**Women
in Public
Sector
Fleet
Management**

WHEN WALKING THROUGH THE AVERAGE FLEET ORGANIZATION TODAY,

from the back offices to the parts room to the shop floor, one may notice a cornucopia of genders, ages and ethnicities working together to keep their communities moving. In recent years, more women have been building fleet management careers across all roles, subsequently paving the way for future generations of women to find success in fleet.

The AssetWorks team is excited to spotlight four women making their mark on the public sector fleet management industry. With their combined 57 years of diverse fleet management experience, these women have made tangible improvements to their organizations, from streamlining the use of fleet technology and writing policies for environmental action to getting their hands dirty on the shop floor.

Mary Joyce Ivers

DEPUTY PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR, CITY OF VENTURA, CA
APWA PRESIDENT, TERM OF 2020-2021

Mary Joyce Ivers has served in the fleet industry for over 27 years. Throughout her career, Mary Joyce has developed strong leadership skills while building an operations team that includes Fleet, Facilities, Streets, Sidewalks, Sweeping, Storm Drains, Stormwater and Environmental Sustainability departments.



CITY OF
VENTURA

What is something about your role that might surprise people?

Being so passionate about public works and fleet, I need to remind myself to stay out of the details and trust our managers to handle the operations and know that I am there to support them. I enjoy sharing experiences and learning from the new approaches the managers are implementing with leading their teams.

What are some of the challenges you face in your role?

Due to [the COVID-19 pandemic] and remote work from home, it is more challenging to strengthen the relationships and focus on the continuous improvement initiatives. I am very supportive of all of our essential workers in the field and ensuring their safety and proper use of PPE.

What is one thing you wish more people knew about your role?

The Deputy Public Works Director position is so rewarding because I can support our entire department, whether through development of our strategic plan, APWA Re-Accreditation, or as a member of the Emergency Operations Center. The position not only oversees maintenance and operations, but also provides a great opportunity to have the knowledge to support the various technical disciplines within Public Works.

What is your proudest accomplishment at work?

The City of Ventura Fleet Services was awarded #1 Fleet in 2014 and 2015 by Government Fleet Magazine. I'm also proud of having a successful succession plan to promote Barbara McCormack to Fleet and Facilities Manager. Barbara is a strong leader, compassionate and handles many fleet challenges with outstanding outcomes!

What is your favorite part of being in your role?

I love working with the entire City organization of essential employees and within a family – friendly environment, along with public servitude.

How do you unwind after a tough day in the office?

Before COVID-19 – tap dancing! And after COVID-19 – movies and outdoor dining.

How have you seen the fleet industry evolve since you started?

Since I started, there have been tremendous strides in technology, the importance of data analytics to review costs of doing business, online technical information, electric vehicle technology, as well as the threat of not having highly skilled technicians to maintain complex fleet vehicles and equipment.

Is there anything you would like to see changed in the fleet industry to allow it to be more inviting for female applicants?

I would love if vocational training at the high school education level was encouraged more, if we promoted STEM better, and if we advertised fleet management as running an exciting and rewarding business that provides critical and essential services to our commerce or communities.

How do you think the fleet industry will change in the next 10 years? What are you most excited for?

Technology will always be evolving. The transportation industry will evolve into different modes of transportation. With the current remote work from home situation, more companies may allow more employees to work from home, thus less miles traveled and reduced vehicles.

Finally, what advice do you have for women who are starting their fleet careers?

Have fun, enjoy, demonstrate how passionate they are for what they do, be confident and show their creativity, expertise, and looking differently at solutions. I had great mentors and a supportive fleet team, and I am happy to share my support to anyone who is interested. I am inspired by our future leaders in fleet, especially qualified women.



Amber Eldridge

DIVISION MANAGER FOR FLEET SERVICES, CITY OF HOUSTON, TX

Amber Eldridge has worked in the fleet industry for 11 years, and has served in her current role since 2017. When she first started in the industry, the fleet was operating on a day-to-day basis: they thought about which problem came next and how they would fix it. Now, Amber and the team use data to make business decisions that impact their fleet, community and city for the foreseeable future.



What is something about your role that might surprise people?

Being a public servant is the best job ever! Public servants are the real MVPs. We sacrifice so much to be here day in and day out even through storms, floods, pandemics or economic downturns often with little to no recognition. It is gratifying to know your job benefits so many people. I have been able

to raise a family, acquire a postgraduate college degree and have a successful career. My coworkers and my leadership make it easy to come to work. We strive to meet our collective goal and I am very proud of that.

What are some of the challenges you face in your role?

I started working in the fleet industry in the garage setting working primarily with mowers and tractors. The City of Houston fleet, in general, was much older, fleet operations were deconsolidated and the computer system was very difficult to use for more than creating work orders to repair units. Today, the City of Houston Fleet Management Department is responsible for the acquisition, maintenance and disposal of more than 12,000 units ranging from police cars to fire trucks to mowers to garbage trucks. All fleet functions have been consolidated

into one department and we have upgraded many of our systems, including the use of M5. In my role, it can be challenging to ensure the system meets the varying needs of users across the City of Houston. In a city this size (population and geographically), we have a host of different users, internally within our Department and externally regarding our clients. We have to consider all of this when implementing changes. Additionally, it can be tough to break the “we’ve always done it this way” mindset for many.

What is one thing you wish more people knew about your role?

Being effective in this role means more than working on a computer. I have to know a great deal about operations and how the user is using and experiencing the fleet management system. I have to put myself in different users’ shoes several times a day and figure it out— quickly. This is a lot of hands-on work and requires visiting the shops, and we have more than 20 of them.

What is your favorite part of being in your role?

I love, love, love being able to search out issues and implement solutions that solve simple problems. I travel all though our system, chasing down leads and working with our operations team to figure out what is going on. My favorite wins are the ones that benefit the entire Department with the least disruption.

Is there anything you would like to see changed in the fleet industry to allow it to be more inviting for female applicants?

Female personnel are not limited to administrative positions. I would like to see more certifications that support the professional growth of mechanic-adjacent positions. We have seen a significant increase in female mechanics and that is amazing for those who have an interest. However, a great deal of our female team members work as Automotive Service Writers or Parts Personnel as an entry point to this industry. There is no formal training that encourages their growth into other areas or provides opportunities that are similar to automotive repair certifications. These positions are crucial to a successful operation, specifically one the size of ours, and can offer tremendous career opportunities, specifically to women.

How do you think the fleet industry will change in the next 10 years? What are you most excited for?

We are already seeing a surge in the use of electric cars and alternative fuels, so the next decade will likely continue to build on this trend. Additionally, I expect that we will also see a huge growth in driverless vehicles. I am most excited for the technology that comes along with driverless cars. It would be fun to watch a driverless garbage truck that is quiet, ecologically friendly and cost-effective help keep our beautiful city clean!

What advice do you have for women who are starting their fleet careers?

Cliché, but learn as much as you can from everyone! Get forklift certified, take the ASE, attend an out-of-the box training, ANYTHING! Do not get boxed-in to the thought that you are limited to administrative roles. Even though I had a college degree, for the first five years of my career, I wore steel toe boots, was a service writer, had been accidentally hit by tools while on the floor and was the only woman on the Operations side. Do not be afraid to get a little dirty. I also had a great manager that let me run with my creativity which allowed me to truly learn the nature of the industry I was in. My manager and director now trust my instincts and my experience and allows me to lead. The mechanics and other personnel I have worked with over the years have not hesitated to show me where something was leaking or how something works when I asked. It makes a world of difference to see something written down and to actually put your hands on it.



Jacqueline Deemak

ADMINISTRATIVE ANALYST, CITY OF LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

Jacqueline Deemak has been working in the fleet industry for four years. In her current role with the Administration division, she has taken on development of the Fleet's annual budget of about \$45M, which includes fuel, maintenance, replacement, and more for over 2,000 vehicles and pieces of equipment. She also continues to be involved in projects from her previous role in the Acquisitions division, including replacement planning, telematics, and sustainability. Going forward, she expects that she will continue to grow in her new role as she completes her first budget cycle with Administration.



CITY OF
LONG BEACH

What is something about your role that might surprise people?

Having automotive knowledge is really helpful, even in administrative roles! Knowing what vehicles and equipment you have, the pros and cons, and how they actually work makes it much easier to create plans and policies, spot errors, anticipate challenges and opportunities, and connect with end users. My automotive background has helped me countless times in my day-to-day work, but also in seeing the bigger picture of fleet operations and how we fit into the city and the industry.

What is your proudest accomplishment at work?

I think my proudest accomplishment has been helping to organize our Battery Electric Vehicle Task Force and writing our citywide BEV Policy. The Task Force began as an interdepartmental group in 2017, created to write a policy for the transition to electric sedans as City vehicles. We expanded the policy to provide guidance and support for future classes of BEVs as well and formalized it in 2018. The Task Force has continued meeting and grown to include other Long Beach agencies – it's now a great resource for collaboration around all electric vehicle issues, including procurement, incentive funding, infrastructure, and workplace charging.

What is your favorite part of being in your role?

My favorite part of my role is working on creative solutions to our challenges. It's an exciting time to be in fleet! We are constantly pushing to be better, safer, and cleaner, and technology is giving us more opportunities to do that than ever before. We are lucky to be in an industry that is very open and collaborative, and I also enjoy working with and learning from internal and external peers and stakeholders. It is always an honor to be a resource and spread awareness of our efforts and the progress our industry is seeing.

How do you unwind after a tough day in the office?

I train in a variety of martial arts including Krav Maga and kickboxing, and recently I've gotten into running. I also like to work on cars for fun and I've taken several night classes in auto mechanics at our local community college.

How have you seen the fleet industry evolve since you started?

In my previous role as Sustainability Analyst, I was really in touch with the industry's focus on alternative fuels. I've seen the perspective on alternative fuels evolve from something that's nice to have to something that is really essential and expected. The same goes for telematics – having live data and exception management is a standard best practice when it was much more cutting edge four years ago. I am really encouraged by the industry's intensifying focus on electrification, data-based management, and innovation.

Is there anything you would like to see changed in the fleet industry to allow it to be more inviting for female applicants?

I hope to see more diversity of all types in people entering the field. Sometimes it can be difficult to break in when you don't appear to fit the mold – I was asked if I was lost as I walked into a fleet conference once! I think more diversity would help make that a nonissue. Overall, and especially at the City of Long Beach Fleet, I have felt extremely welcome and encouraged, so I think the key to more diversity will be in the hiring and recruiting phase.

How do you think the fleet industry will change in the next 10 years? What are you most excited for?

I think the fleet industry will be moving toward zero-emission vehicles in a big way. Where that's not possible or practical (yet), we'll continue to see innovative solutions like renewable diesel, renewable natural gas, and cleaner engine technology. I look forward to continued electrification and how the fleet industry explores infrastructure, wireless charging, efficient charge management, and renewable sources like solar. I also think big data will continue to be a major point of interest, though the focus will probably continue to shift from obtaining the data to ways that we can put that data to use. I don't know whether autonomous vehicles will be mainstream in ten years, but I do think vehicles will be increasingly computerized, which will mean changes in maintenance operations, technician training, and fleet management.

What advice do you have for women who are starting their fleet careers?

I would advise getting some basic experience with automotive mechanics if you don't have any, for anyone who may be starting out in the field – there are many fleet jobs that don't require it, but it comes in handy and offers credibility and a way to connect with others. There is a lot of fleet-specific knowledge that you may not have when you come into the job, so learn as much as you can and don't worry if it takes a while to speak the fleet language. I think fleet is a great opportunity for women and I would urge them not to overlook it – there is plenty of opportunity within the industry and the skills you develop will be transferable if you end up somewhere else!



Tambra Milot

APPLICATION ANALYST II, CITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

Tambra Milot has been working in the fleet industry for fifteen years. The responsibilities of her role have evolved from system administration to taking an active role in the department's business processes and decisions. For example, when she was asked to lead the Parts Department, she reorganized the staffs' duties and responsibilities to enhance the support of the maintenance and repair shops. The implemented changes remain in place today and have established the framework for future progress to continue. Currently, she is tasked to implement the technical aspects of the future fleet replacement program as directed by the City Manager. Working with the Office of Strategic Initiatives, this job entails the standup of the program to include processes, budgeting and close coordination the with using departments.



What is something about your role that might surprise people?

I enjoy what I do, whether it be troubleshooting an issue or developing an improvement to procedures. What might surprise people is the diversity of roles that I have been asked to accommodate.

What are some of the challenges you face in your role?

Resistance to change. Working through such challenges requires a good understanding of the need for change and communicating that to all involved.

What is one thing you wish more people knew about your role?

Since my I.T. role supports the work of the department, most of what I do is behind the scenes. I take great personal satisfaction in my work.

What is your proudest accomplishment at work?

My proudest accomplishment was the system upgrade and implementation of AssetWorks FleetFocus. This project required me to fully understand the business practices of our organization to ensure a smooth transition. I coordinated with AssetWorks in prep for the data migration and led each division of our department through testing and training. I am fortunate to work with a great team!

What is your favorite part of being in your role?

I love being a resource to others and helping them develop more efficient methods. The best part is seeing them take pride and ownership of their work. Once they own it, they take care of it.

How do you unwind after a tough day in the office?

Family time. My greatest enjoyment comes from spending time with my family.

How have you seen the fleet industry evolve since you started?

We certainly have more females in this industry's workforce, in all areas of management, technicians and parts supply. There are more training opportunities through virtual classes. We have more resources for data collection with telematics and better use of the software systems. The technical improvements that we have seen in vehicles and equipment during the period that I have been involved in this business, are indeed dramatic. I.T. plays a significant role, not only in system management, but in the operation of the vehicles and equipment themselves.

Is there anything you would like to see changed in the fleet industry to allow it to be more inviting for female applicants?

Job advertisements that reach all demographics would help to invite a more diverse pool.

How do you think the fleet industry will change in the next 10 years? What are you most excited for?

Technology continues to advance, providing driver safety, fuel efficiency and hybrid power. I'm looking forward to the dramatically innovative improvements that will enhance the way we work.

Finally, what advice do you have for women who are starting their fleet careers?

I can break down my advice into four steps:

- Take the time to look at the whole organization, often.
- Know your fleet.
- Know your customers' needs.
- Never stop learning.

To learn more about the fleet management technology mentioned in this article, please visit www.assetworks.com/fleet.