



CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

Howard County Public Schools Upgrades Preventive Maintenance with Dude Solutions and ALPHA

CLIENT

Howard County Public Schools

GEOGRAPHY

Columbia, Maryland

POPULATION

57,000 students; 77 schools

CHALLENGES

The district knew it needed to move away from paper-based processes and streamline its preventive maintenance program, but the need was amplified when Maryland legislature enacted a bill that could restrict their equipment funding if found non-compliant with proper recordkeeping.

Through partnering with Dude Solutions and ALPHA Facilities Solutions, the district has now collected the data to run an effective preventive maintenance program, be confident about legislature compliance and pull KPIs for leadership.



WORK AND ASSET

When the state of Maryland passed legislation in 2018 that could prevent school districts from receiving funding for new equipment, the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) took it as motivation to get their preventive maintenance under better control. The legislation said that to receive funding for equipment replacement, a district would have to be able to prove that proper preventive maintenance (PM) was performed on the equipment if it failed before its typical lifecycle. While the district of Howard County had been working on PM schedules for their HVAC equipment beginning in 2016, there was a lot unaccounted for, and they weren't sure if the work documentation they had created thus far was up to industry standard, which was required by the bill.

“We were doing PM. However, it was a paper-based system, so the recordkeeping and reporting wasn't ideal. We decided we needed to do a better job with this, and due to limited resources and time constraints, we needed somebody to come in and assist with the data gathering and create PM schedules,” says Craig Powell, Data Administrator for the district.

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They were already using Dude Solutions maintenance software to begin a PM program, as well as Dude Solutions' inventory software to manage assets, so they decided to team up with its affiliated partner ALPHA Facilities Solutions to begin the data gathering project. That way they could be confident if the need came to provide PM records to the state. In 2018, ALPHA came in and inventoried their equipment and created PM plans for the school system's electrical and plumbing shops. The data was then uploaded into their Dude Solutions maintenance software so they could receive automated work orders on what needed to be performed and collect proper records. Despite having nine million square feet to cover, ALPHA completed the data gathering in just two weeks, focusing primarily on the district's plumbing and electrical assets.

“They had three teams. They averaged 600,000 square feet a day. They reviewed and quality-controlled the collected data on the equipment they inventoried. They assigned preventive maintenance schedules and reviewed with us the assigned PM schedules for desired frequencies and start dates, and then they gave that information to Dude Solutions for upload,” says Craig.

Sandra Starner, who will be taking over the role when Craig retires this year, adds, “Their experience knowing what to PM took the overwhelming task away from our department of trying to make sure they were picking the right equipment. With ALPHA's experience, they were able to hit the ground running. They knew what needed to be done.”

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Once ALPHA collected the necessary data for plumbing and electrical assets, they also checked the PM work the team had already begun on their HVAC equipment to make sure it would meet legislature requirements. “In 2016, we used our standard operations. When this bill was passed, we wanted to make sure we were up to industry standard. When ALPHA came in, they were able to look at the PM schedules we had already created and make sure everything was up to the line,” says Sandra.

The district is now seeing the benefits of having the data ALPHA collected uploaded in their Dude Solutions software, which allows them to easily keep track of PM work and drill down into exactly what’s involved. “I like the fact that it’s an automated schedule. I like that it gives me a reminder that it’s time to make an order. I’m able to see what that PM cost HCPSS at a glance, so I’m very happy with the PM from a working standpoint and scheduling and efficiency,” says Sandra. “It’s all right there on the screen – what filters they’re going to need, what belts they’ll need. Everything is right there. You’re not going to different places to find what you’re going to need for that PM. It’s at your fingertips.”

In addition to now having proper recordkeeping for Maryland legislature, Sandra and Craig also note how the solution is helping them discuss KPIs with school leadership and make data-backed cases for what they need, as well as how data informs their budgeting.

“Last week Craig pulled a KPI out from the executive summary for our management team to show improvement and that we are growing through our PMs and the amount of work orders that are being completed. If we don’t get more people, we have to do more work with what we have. I feel like we’re able to show that we have this much work ahead of us and that we need more people, and this is why we’re lagging behind. That’s the one thing we really want to show, that we need more people for the amount of buildings we have,” says Sandra. “I’m able to report up to my supervisors where we’re at and where we’re going. The data now is such a big part of our world. Everybody wants to know the data. We’re able to see what we’re deferring, what we don’t have funding for. I’m starting to take part in the projects and budgeting side of things, so it’s going to help us next year when we budget. It helps me see what’s out there to do.”

Sandra and Craig added that they not only got the data they were seeking – they also got support.

“When you call for support, you’re usually in the middle of something and can’t get any further, and you want to finish it. You want a quick response to be able to move on. You’re not having to be frustrated, because you usually have your solution that hour or shortly after. And it’s easy to use. The support is great. Dude has a lot of energy, and we saw that when we were at Dude University. All the associates had so much energy and cared about what they were doing,” Sandra says.



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“Support has been absolutely wonderful. It’s really nice being able to call into a company for support and a person actually answers the phone instead of going to voicemail. It’s someone knowledgeable that answers, and if they don’t know the answer, they’ll find it and get back to us, usually within an hour or so. There are very few companies out there that supply support like you do. It’s great to have someone we can call that can get us going again quickly. It’s really appreciated,” adds Craig. “I’ve been approached by several counties in the past asking questions about Dude Solutions and how we’re using it, and I recommend it every time.”