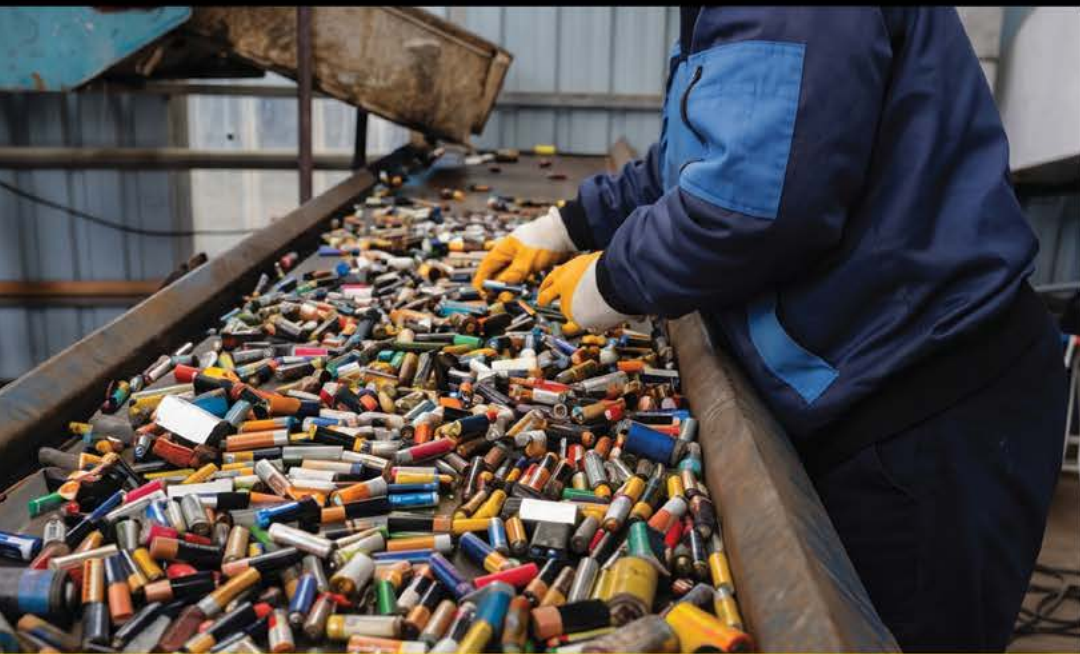


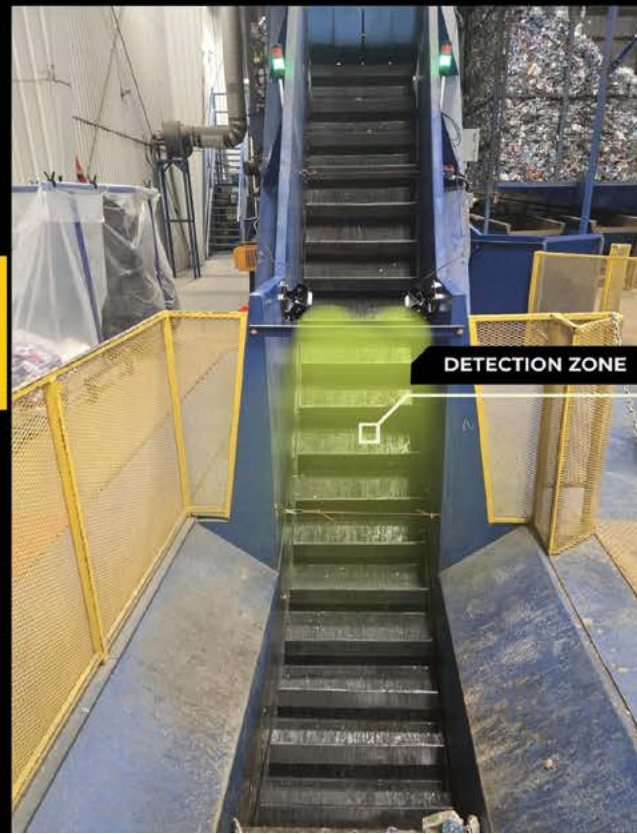
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MAGAZINE

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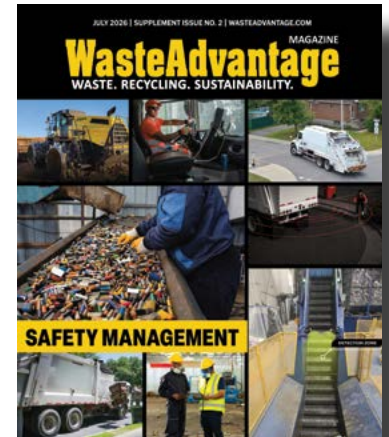
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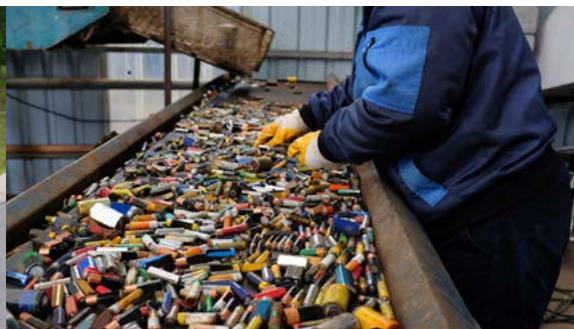
## FEATURES

- 3** From the Publisher
- 4** Lithium Batteries in the Waste Stream:  
What Waste and Recycling Facilities Need to Know
- 6** From the Cab to the Community:  
How Today's Best Safety Tech Goes Beyond the Dashboard
- 8** Turning Near Misses into Prevention:  
Improving Visibility and Safety in Waste and Recycling Operations
- 10** Prioritizing Safety in Waste Collection  
Through Intelligent Route Planning
- 12** Your Truck is Surrounded



Photos courtesy of Autocar, The Battery Network, RouteSmart, Routeware, and Scan-Link.

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!



# FROM THE PUBLISHER

From the cab to the road—and across MRFs, landfills, and other facilities—safety is a fundamental part of the waste and recycling industry. It is not only essential to protecting workers, but also the communities these operations serve. While the industry remains on the list of most dangerous jobs, meaningful progress continues. Through the adoption of best practices, shared real-world experiences, advancing technologies, and ongoing training, organizations are actively working toward safer, more effective operations tailored to their unique needs. It is our hope that this special supplement helps drive those conversations forward and supports continued improvement across the industry.

We will be holding our Post-Collection Safety Webinar coming up on September 10th from 2:00 - 3:30pmET. With topics ranging from reducing risk in the post-collection process, fire safety, safety training in post-collection, addressing safety issues at the landfill, and more, this event will dive deep into practical insights to help keep your team safe, informed, and well prepared. Register for free and join us on September 10th! [www.wasteadvantagemag.com/safety-webinars](http://www.wasteadvantagemag.com/safety-webinars).

Visit other parts of the Waste Advantage website for updated news and articles, including those from our most recent and upcoming issues. Our Supplier Directory spotlights companies that provide you with waste and recycling industry solutions, including safety management tools and services. As a networking platform for buyers and sellers, readers can review a company's specialty, including the products and services offered through descriptions, images, videos, and more. Please feel free to reach out with any comments or questions. We always like to hear from you.

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# Lithium Batteries in the Waste Stream: What Waste and Recycling Facilities Need to Know



As battery volumes continue to grow, safe sorting and handling practices play an increasingly important role in reducing operational risks.

LITHIUM BATTERIES HAVE RESHAPED MODERN LIFE. Since the 1990s, they have made smartphones, cordless tools, e-bikes, and electric vehicles possible. That same boom is creating a growing problem for waste and recycling facilities across the country, and the volume is only increasing.

More battery-powered products mean more end-of-life batteries being disposed of without proper handling or awareness of the risk. When those batteries reach your tipping floor, they bring serious safety risk with them.

## Why Lithium-Ion Batteries Are Different

Lithium-ion batteries store a large amount of energy in a compact space. Under normal use, they are generally safe. The danger comes

when they are damaged, crushed, or punctured, conditions that happen routinely in waste and recycling operations.

When a battery is damaged, it can overheat and trigger a chain reaction called thermal runaway. Once that starts, the battery can release heat, gas, and flames very quickly. If combustible materials like paper, cardboard, or plastics are nearby, a small battery fire can become a facility-wide incident fast.

## Risks Every Facility Needs to Manage *Incoming Materials You Cannot Fully Control*

Consumer awareness of battery disposal has improved, but habits have not caught up with volume. Batteries still arrive mixed into curbside bins, general trash, and recyclables. Your intake and sorting processes need to account for this reality.



## Equipment Interaction

Compactors, balers, and shredders are the most common ignition points for battery incidents. A battery that survives collection may not survive processing. Review which areas of your operation create the most friction and heat and treat those zones accordingly.

## Delayed Ignition

Thermal runaway does not always start on contact. A battery damaged earlier in the process can smolder for hours and ignite later, including overnight. Facilities that rely only on daytime fire watch are leaving a meaningful gap in coverage.

## What Effective Battery Safety Looks Like

The scale of this problem is hard to overstate. According to a joint report from National Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA) and Resource Recycling Systems (RRS), more than 5,000 fires occur annually at U.S. recycling facilities with lithium batteries being a leading cause. Across the industry, several battery safety practices have proven effective at reducing risk and preventing incidents:

1. *Train early and often:* Employees should understand the risks batteries pose, recognize signs of battery damage or thermal runaway, and know how to respond when a battery or battery-containing device is encountered.
2. *Establish handling and isolation protocols:* When a battery is found, workers should know exactly how to safely remove, secure, and store it. Damaged, leaking, or smoking batteries should be stored separately in a fire-resistant enclosure away from other materials.
3. *Have the right safety tools on hand:* Facilities should be equipped to respond quickly to battery incidents. A lithium-ion battery incident kit onsite is a strong starting point. These kits help contain and suppress thermal runaway events before they escalate.
4. *Consider a safer mixed battery collection system:* High-volume operations are increasingly turning to mixed battery collection systems with integrated fire suppression that do not require sorting or prepping batteries—reducing handling and creating a more controlled environment from intake to transport.
5. *Support proper battery recycling in your community:* Promoting proper battery recycling and supporting battery collection networks reduces the number of batteries entering the waste stream improperly.

## An Operational Priority

Battery safety is a shared responsibility, from the consumer who drops a battery in the recycling bin to the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) worker sorting the line. The facilities best positioned to manage this challenge treat it as an operational priority, not just an emergency response problem. | **WA**

For more information, e-mail [connect@batterynetwork.org](mailto:connect@batterynetwork.org).



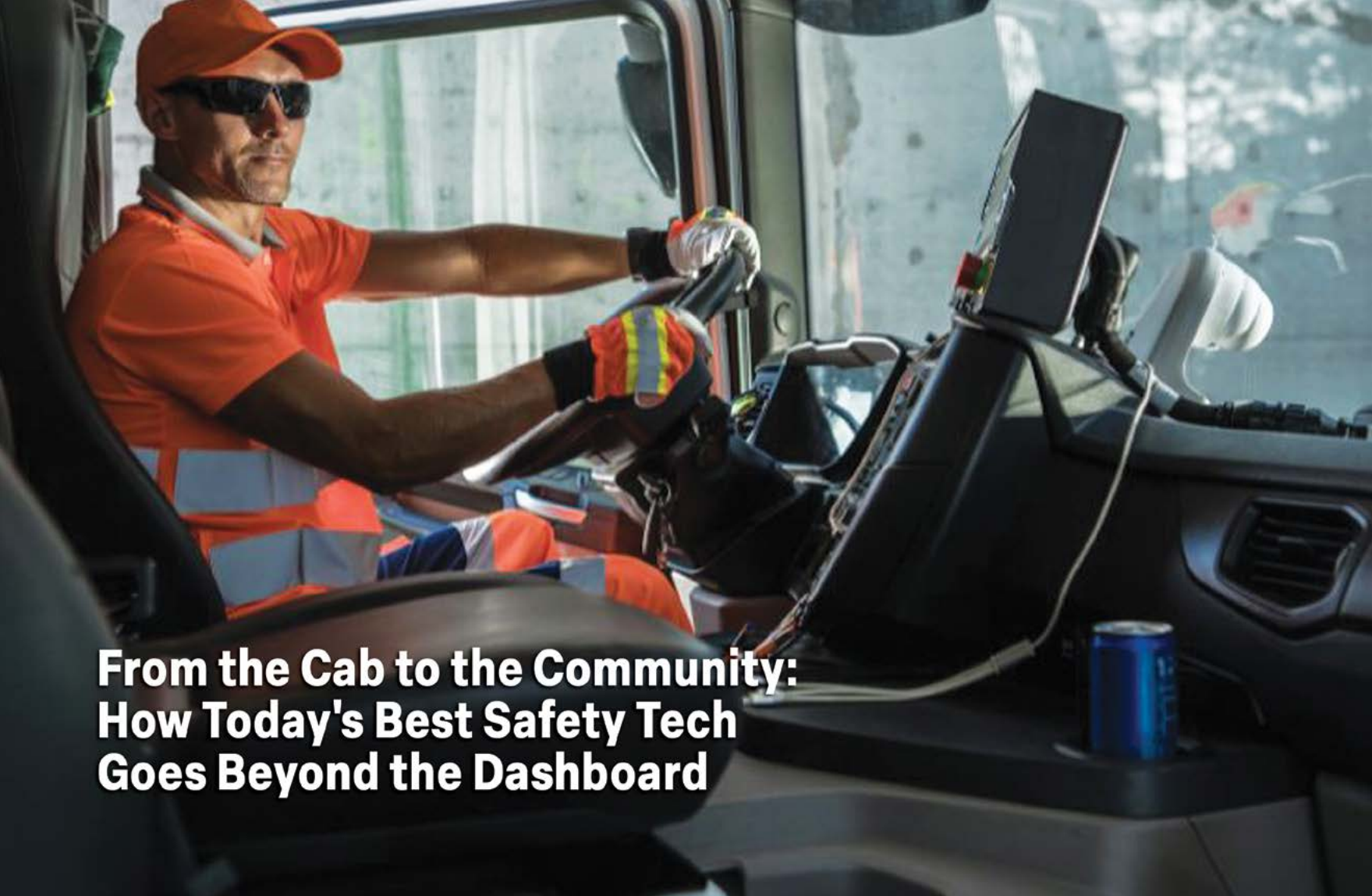
Training, clear procedures, and preparedness help waste and recycling facilities reduce battery-related safety risks and respond effectively when incidents occur.

ity (MRF) worker sorting the line. The facilities best positioned to manage this challenge treat it as an operational priority, not just an emergency response problem. | **WA**

For more information, e-mail [connect@batterynetwork.org](mailto:connect@batterynetwork.org).

An advertisement for The Battery Network and OneDrum. The background is a dark, industrial setting with a large pile of discarded batteries. At the top, there are logos for 'The Battery Network' and 'OneDrum'. Below the logos, the text reads 'Simple, Safe Battery Collection Starts Here'. Underneath this, there are three bullet points: '+ No sorting, taping, or bagging', '+ Improve safety &amp; reduce risk', and '+ Simplify compliant shipping'. Further down, it says 'Get Started with OneDrum™'. At the bottom left, there is a QR code. At the bottom right, there is a button with the text 'batterynetwork.org'.





## From the Cab to the Community: How Today's Best Safety Tech Goes Beyond the Dashboard

In-cab tablets minimize distraction by automating stop verification and delivering real-time updates.



THE U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS RECENTLY ranked solid waste collection as the 5th most dangerous job in America—an unenviable spot on that list. For fleet managers and public works directors, that number confirms what they already know: the risks facing drivers are real, they are growing, and managing them with clipboards and verbal coaching is not enough anymore. Fortunately, the technology available to address those risks has evolved and so has the policy momentum pushing fleet operators to act.

### When Cameras Do More Than Record

Most fleets understand that onboard cameras document incidents. Fewer realize how much more integrated camera systems can do when paired with the right platform. Video solutions provide 360-degree coverage around the vehicle and captures event-triggered foot-

age—activating on hard braking, collision impact, or sudden acceleration. However, the real value is not in the recording itself; it is in what gets done with it.

When Gaeta Green Environmental Services deployed our cameras alongside in-cab technology, the goal was not just surveillance—it was closing visibility gaps that create risk in the first place. Full-coverage camera views give drivers better situational awareness in real time, while also providing the evidence needed to resolve incidents quickly and fairly. Drivers are protected from false claims. Investigations that once took days can be resolved in minutes. And video-based coaching replaces guesswork with specific accountability.

Some configurations go further, alerting drivers immediately when unsafe behavior is detected—giving them the chance to self-correct in the moment rather than learning about it after the fact. That shift, from



retrospective review to real-time awareness, is where camera technology meaningfully changes outcomes.

## Safety Infrastructure That Feeds Policy Goals

There is a newer dimension to the safety conversation: federal policy is catching up with the technology. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Safe Roads initiative, launched in mid-2025, targets non-freeway arterial roads—where more than half of U.S. traffic fatalities occur—and municipalities that can demonstrate data-informed safety programs are better positioned for compliance and grant eligibility under initiatives like SS4A (Safe Streets and Roads for All).

This is where fleet technology becomes infrastructure policy. Driver behavior metrics—speeding events, hard stops, route deviations—captured through video platforms provide exactly the kind of granular, location-specific data that city planners and DOTs need. Agencies using these types of technologies are, in effect, already building the data foundation that federal safety programs will require.

## The Safety Problem That Starts at the Curb

Driver safety does not begin when the truck pulls out of the yard. It begins with what residents put in the bin. Lithium-ion batteries improperly disposed of in curbside carts are now a leading cause of truck fires and MRF equipment failures. Tangles—hoses, cords, plastic bags—wrap around machinery and cause costly breakdowns that force workers into hazardous manual extraction situations. These are not edge cases; they are recurring, preventable incidents that place both drivers and processing facility staff at serious risk.

Resident education tools address this upstream. Self-serve education portals, targeted notifications, and behavioral data tracking help cities and haulers shift resident habits before the wrong material reaches the vehicle. Reducing contamination rates and fire risks at the source is as much a driver safety intervention as any in-cab technology.

## Safety as a System, Not a Feature

Today's realities dictate that safety be a top consideration across fleet systems, not a standalone module. Optimized routing reduces fatigue before a driver ever leaves the depot. In-cab tablets minimize distraction by automating stop verification and delivering real-time updates. Behavior metrics, cameras, and telematics work together to support proactive improvement rather than after-the-fact accountability. And resident education helps keep dangerous materials out of the waste stream entirely. Tech-forward cities, both small and large, are already seeing the results: safety and efficiency are not competing priorities.



Full-coverage camera views give drivers better situational awareness in real time, while also providing the evidence needed to resolve incidents quickly and fairly.

Getting everyone home safe is not a dashboard metric. In today's modernizing operations, it is the outcome that every part of the system is designed to support. | **WA**

*Visit [routeware.com](https://routeware.com) to learn more about Routeware's safety solutions.*

**Routeware**  
Helping collection teams  
work safer, smarter, and  
with confidence





# Turning Near Misses into Prevention: Improving Visibility and Safety in Waste and Recycling Operations

SCAN~LINK installed on a BOMAG landfill compactor.



THE WASTE AND RECYCLING INDUSTRY CONTINUES TO experience some of the highest occupational fatality rates in the U.S., according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, and underscores the ongoing need for stronger safety practices across the sector.

In transfer stations, landfills, recycling plants, material recovery facilities (MRFs), or commercial collection sites, workers routinely perform tasks in close proximity to loaders, dozers, compactors, conveyors, and other mobile equipment. These environments are dynamic, noisy, and often congested. Visibility can change quickly due to dust, debris, lighting conditions, equipment positioning, or worker movement.

For safety leaders, the challenge is not just identifying hazards, but also ensuring that operators and workers maintain awareness of one another as conditions change throughout the day.

## Building a Culture of Safety

Safety outcomes are driven not only by equipment and procedures, but also by organizational culture. Workers must believe that safety is valued as highly as productivity, and management must consistently reinforce that message through policy and practice. A strong safety culture requires organizations to address risks proactively rather than react only after incidents occur.

## A Shift Towards Proactive Measures

One practical way to strengthen safety culture is to focus on leading indicators rather than lagging indicators. While looking at previous injury rates and incident reports remain important, developing a strong safety culture requires a more proactive approach. Industry experts such as Will Flower advocate for using key performance indicators



(KPIs) such as near miss data and hazard observations to assess safety performance. These leading indicators can help organizations identify emerging risks before an incident occurs and provide valuable insight into worker and equipment interactions throughout a facility or jobsite.

## Managing Equipment and Conveyor Hazards

A proactive approach is especially important in waste and recycling operations where proximity hazards are common. In material recovery facilities, workers may operate near conveyors, balers, shredders, and sorting equipment. In landfill and transfer station environments, personnel often work alongside loaders, compactors, and haul vehicles.

Many incidents occur not because hazards are unknown, but because conditions change rapidly. A worker can quickly enter a blind spot, move into a high-risk area, or become obscured by equipment, materi-

supplement existing safety practices and provide additional awareness when workers enter high-risk zones.

When integrated, these tools can help organizations identify high-risk areas and recurring hazards, document near misses, and generate data that supports continuous improvement. The goal is not to replace training, procedures, or supervision, but to add multiple layers of protection that reduce the likelihood of a serious incident.

## Turning Data into Prevention

While safety practices in the waste and recycling industry continue to evolve, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows that risk mitigation remains a persistent challenge across the sector. By combining strong leadership, proactive measurement, and practical controls, companies can continue working toward the shared goal of reducing exposure in high-risk environments and sending every worker home safely at the end of the day. | **WA**

*SCAN~LINK Technologies Inc. is a provider of passive RFID worker detection systems for waste, recycling, and conveyor operations. For more information, contact Eric Burton at (905) 304-6100, ext. 216, e-mail [eburton@scan-link.com](mailto:eburton@scan-link.com), or visit [www.scan-link.com/waste](http://www.scan-link.com/waste).*

## Reference

- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Waste Management and Remediation Services: NAICS 562 Biderman, David; Flower, Will. *Waste Advantage* Safety Supplement, January 2025.



SCAN~LINK installed on a conveyor system.

als, or debris. Maintaining awareness of worker locations around active equipment remains a key challenge.

## Technology as a Supporting Layer of Protection

Technology can play a supporting role in addressing these challenges. Proximity warning systems, telematics, and worker detection technologies such as passive RFID are increasingly being used to

A graphic advertisement for SCAN~LINK. It features a dark background with a conveyor system on the right side, illuminated by a green laser line. The text "SCAN~LINK" is at the top. Below it, the main headline reads "PREVENT STRUCK-BY AND CONVEYOR ACCIDENTS WITH PASSIVE RFID SAFETY SOLUTIONS". Three green arrows point to the right, containing the text "IMPROVE WORKER SAFETY", "DATA-DRIVEN PREVENTION", and "TRUSTED WORLDWIDE". At the bottom, the contact information is listed: "1-905-304-6100 | [info@scan-link.com](mailto:info@scan-link.com) | [www.scan-link.com/waste](http://www.scan-link.com/waste)".





## Prioritizing Safety in Waste Collection Through Intelligent Route Planning

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Tackle common waste and recycling challenges like safety, efficiency, and customer service with RouteSmart.



WASTE COLLECTION CONSISTENTLY RANKS AMONG THE most hazardous occupations in the nation. While comprehensive safety training and rigorous vehicle maintenance are foundational, the actual paths drivers navigate every day play a vital role in mitigating risks. By prioritizing safety at the planning stage, fleet managers can proactively engineer hazard reduction directly into their daily operations before a truck ever leaves the yard.

Drawing on practical insights from industry experts and route planning professionals, following are key strategies to design safer routes and protect your crews on the street.

### **Eliminate Unsafe Turns and Maneuvers**

The safest route is not always the shortest or the fastest, and operations should never compromise on safety for speed. Crossing oncoming traffic presents a high risk of collisions, especially for

large collection vehicles with extensive blind spots. Modern routing configurations can heavily penalize left hand turns across busy multi lane roads, favoring a continuous, safer right-hand flow. Furthermore, plans must be engineered to limit U-turns and backing up, which is inherently dangerous due to limited rear visibility.

### **Prioritize Right Side Only Collection**

When operators must cross the street to retrieve and empty bins, they are dangerously exposed to passing traffic, which remains a leading cause of severe injuries in the industry. Creating routes where the vehicle approaches stops so that the collection points are always on the passenger side, keeps the crew safely out of the active roadway. This approach not only protects your essential workers, but also speeds up collection times since operators do not have to wait for traffic to clear to cross the street.



## Distribute Workloads to Prevent Fatigue

Workload distribution is a critical component of route safety. When routes are poorly balanced, some drivers are pushed beyond realistic capacities and forced to rush to finish their shifts. Rushing leads to fatigue, skipped safety checks, and careless mistakes. Using intelligent routing algorithms ensures that every single route represents a fair, achievable, and manageable day of work. This keeps drivers alert, focused, and stress free throughout their shift.

## Deliver Relatable, Behavior-Based Training

While monthly lectures are common, drivers often tune out repetitive messages. Safety communication should be delivered in short, frequent, and dynamic sessions. Rather than relying on rigid compliance lists, training should focus on behavior-based coaching. Using real-world visuals, such as local street hazards or recent incident photos, makes the message relatable. Remind drivers that safety protocols are not just about protecting the equipment, but are also about ensuring all they return home to their families at the end of the day.

## Coach Drivers with Fleet Technology and Data

Onboard cameras and telematics generate massive amounts of helpful data, but their true value lies in positive coaching. When technology flags unsafe behavior, such as a driver distracted by a mobile device or neglecting a seatbelt, use the short video clip to have a constructive conversation. Approaching these moments as coaching opportunities rather than strictly disciplinary actions helps build trust and shifts the organizational culture toward proactive safety.

## Plan for Seasonal and Environmental Shifts

Summer introduces unique operational hazards, from severe heat stroke risks to increased tourist traffic and children playing in residential areas. High summer temperatures require strict water, rest, and shade protocols. Additionally, summer vacations mean replacement drivers are often running routes they are entirely unfamiliar with. Providing these drivers with clear, voice-guided route navigation prevents them from having to stare at screens or make sudden, unsafe maneuvers in unfamiliar territory.

## Safety Success

By focusing on intelligent route planning and consistent coaching, waste collection fleets can successfully build a culture of safety that protects both employees and the public. For additional fleet safety resources and training guides, organizations can consult the National Waste and Recycling Association and the Solid Waste Association of North America. | **WA**



Optimize routes and improve service across residential, commercial, and roll-off operations with RouteSmart's powerful routing software.

*For more information, contact Jessica Cearfoss, Senior Business Development Manager, at [jcearfoss@routesmart.com](mailto:jcearfoss@routesmart.com).*



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## Your Truck is Surrounded



EVERY TIME A REFUSE TRUCK LEAVES THE YARD, IT enters someone's world. Children walk to school. Cyclists ride to work. Sanitation workers collect carts. Drivers commute. Customers visit businesses. Pedestrians cross busy streets. No matter the route, one thing never changes.

### Your Truck is Surrounded By Risk

Refuse trucks spend their day working where people are closest. They stop hundreds of times, navigate narrow streets, back into tight spaces, and operate in constantly changing environments. Most routes end without incident, but it only takes one unexpected moment to change everything.

A child steps into the street. A pedestrian crosses behind the truck. A cyclist appears in a blind spot. A sanitation worker moves where the driver is not expecting. These are not rare events. They are the everyday realities of refuse collection. That is why the conversation around safety should not begin with a feature list. It should begin with people.

Backing incidents are a common risk in refuse. Automatic reverse braking helps reduce that risk by stopping the truck when a collision is imminent.

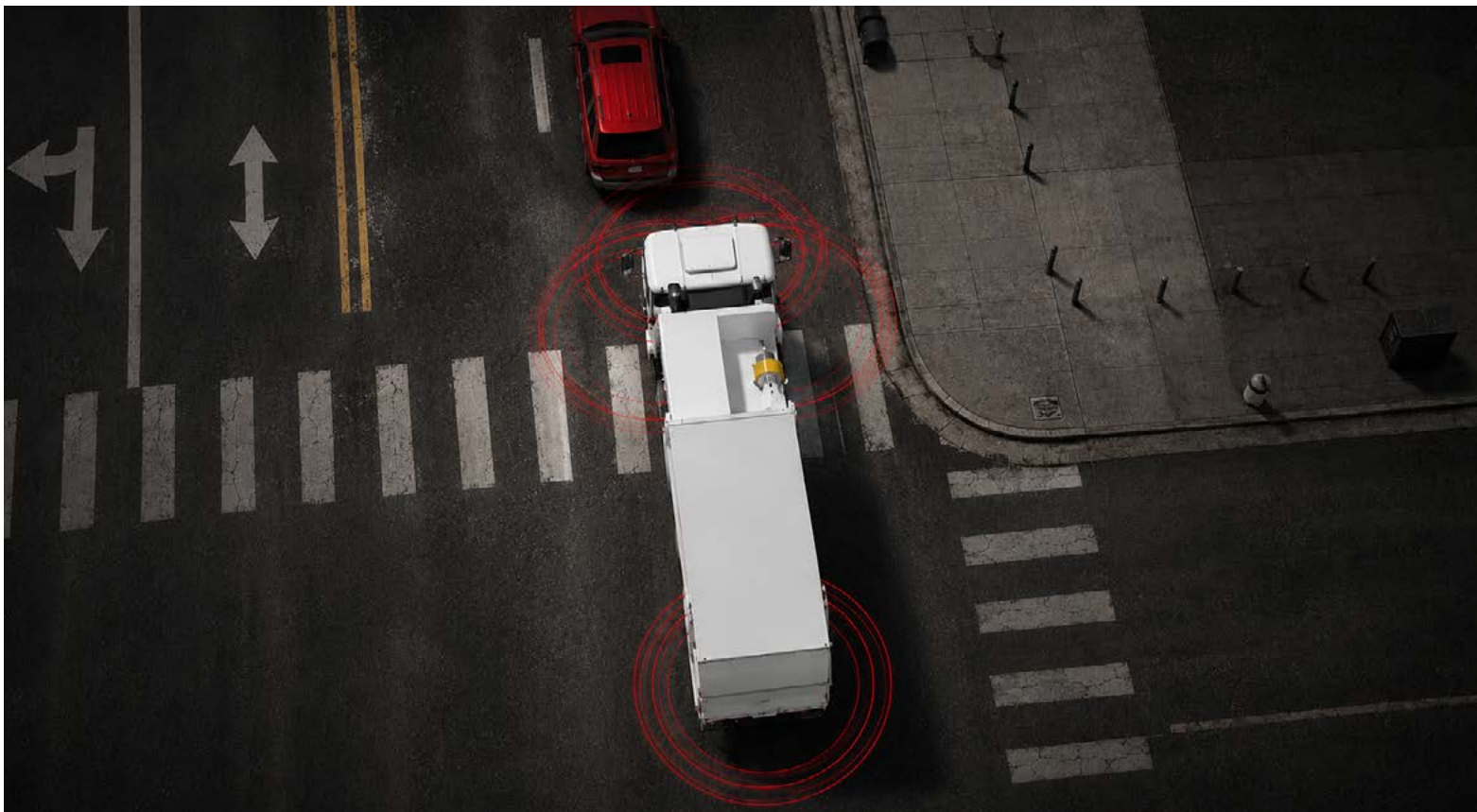
The purpose of modern safety technology is not just to make trucks smarter. It is to help protect the people who work around them and the communities they serve. The best systems are designed to help drivers recognize hazards sooner, provide meaningful warnings when risk is increasing and provide another layer of protection when every second counts. Just as important, they should be designed around the realities of refuse collection.

### When Something Goes Wrong, the Impact Rarely Ends at the Scene

Repairs, insurance claims, route disruptions, equipment downtime and driver support follow. More serious incidents can bring reputational damage and lasting consequences for the people involved. The true cost of risk is not measured only in damaged equipment. It is measured in operational disruption, community trust and, most importantly, lives changed.

That is why safety technology should be viewed as part of a broader risk management strategy, not simply another feature package. At the same time, expectations are changing.





The Autocar ADAM™ system uses strategically placed radars to help drivers detect potential hazards around the truck during low-speed operation.

Active safety technologies like automatic emergency braking, pedestrian detection, blind-spot monitoring and lane-departure warning are quickly becoming the new expectation. Fleets are increasingly evaluated not only by the trucks they operate, but by the steps they take to help protect the people around them.

That makes choosing the right system more important than ever. On paper, many refuse safety systems sound alike. They use familiar terms like pedestrian detection, blind-spot coverage, collision warnings and driver alerts. But those descriptions do not tell the whole story.

### Similar Claims Do Not Always Deliver Similar Protection

Look beyond the feature names. Ask whether the system was designed specifically for refuse operations or adapted from another industry. Ask whether it detects people or only vehicles. Ask whether it actively intervenes or simply provides warnings. Ask whether blind-spot coverage is truly dual-sided. Ask whether the system is engineered into the truck or installed later as an aftermarket solution.

Those answers can significantly affect how a system performs where it matters most. That is why leading fleets are asking a different question:

- Not, “What features does this truck have?”
- But, “How does this truck help protect the people around it?”

That shift in thinking is shaping the future of refuse safety. It is moving the conversation beyond technology for technology’s sake and toward something far more important. Because every route is different. Every stop is different. But every refuse truck is surrounded.

For more information about refuse safety systems, e-mail [adam@autocartruck.com](mailto:adam@autocartruck.com).

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## **Post-Collection Safety Webinar**

**September 10, 2026 2-3:30 pm ET**

Keeping your team safe starts here. Join us on September 10th from 2 – 3:30 PM EST for the Post-Collection Safety Webinar! Join industry experts as we dive into essential safety practices in post-collection operations. This webinar will deliver practical insights to help keep your teams safe, informed, and prepared.

**Topics Include:**

Isolate the Energy, Secure the Space  
Reducing Risk in the Post Collection Process  
Safer Operations, Fewer Incidents  
Fire Safety in Post-Collection

Safety Issues at the Landfill  
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