



## EASTERN PROPANE & OIL IMPROVES FUEL DELIVERY EFFICIENCY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE WITH PANASONIC TABLETS

### CHALLENGE

Eastern Propane & Oil is always seeking to improve the productivity of its fuel delivery personnel and service technicians in the field. When the company's data capture needs evolved and software applications became more robust, the existing mobile devices used by field workers couldn't keep pace with the increased performance or reliability required.

### SOLUTION

The energy company selected the Panasonic Toughpad® FZ-G1 fully rugged tablet due to the superior computing power and long battery life it was able to offer, both in vehicle and out in the field, while withstanding often tough New England terrain and weather.

### RESULT

Eastern Propane & Oil increased efficiency in the field by automating the delivery process and increasing customer service along the way, which in turn improved its bottom line.

### Delivering Reliability to Field Workers on the Go

Established in 1932, Eastern Propane & Oil is a full-service propane and oil company serving New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Vermont. It delivers high quality, reliable and competitively-priced propane and oil to more than 85,000 residential and commercial customers. Eastern Propane & Oil's fuel delivery personnel and service technicians require rugged and reliable mobile devices to complete their jobs.

Eastern Propane & Oil fuel delivery drivers start their shift by accessing real-time route, schedule and customer information for the day on their mobile device. They then connect the device to a fuel meter in the truck where a software application monitors the starting level and tracks fuel depletion as deliveries are made throughout their shift. Service technicians use the mobile devices at customer sites when performing on-site repair and maintenance, to document customer information, as well as order or track spare parts.



## CASE STUDY: EASTERN PROPANE & OIL

While delivery teams were using meters with attached handheld board or lap pad, service teams were using Motorola MC65s handheld devices. As the company's business grew, it needed to modernize its delivery solution and replace the Motorola devices which couldn't keep pace with the increase in data capture required.

Workers experienced battery failures in the field and found the form factor difficult to use given the variety of tasks required of them. They required a larger screen for increased usability, more computing power to handle a new robust software application and longer battery life to survive long shifts. Extreme durability was also key since the device needed to withstand constant pounding in their fleet of 240 vehicles, as well as consistently operate outside in extreme New England weather conditions.

### Better Reliability and Improved Customer Service

After extensive review, Eastern Propane & Oil selected the 10.1" [Toughpad FZ-G1](#) fully rugged tablet based on its processing power, form factor and durability. As an added benefit, the company was able to maintain a legacy printer system installed in their trucks, as the Toughpad FZ-G1 features a compatible integrated serial port.

"The Toughpad FZ-G1 was everything we were looking for in a new device," said Mike Vinciguerra, mobile system administrator at Eastern Propane & Oil. "Our field workers see a night-and-day difference from our previous solution with no memory errors from demanding tasks and overuse. It's been hard to get them into their hands fast enough."

With Verizon Wireless mobile broadband embedded, the Toughpad FZ-G1 now provides a real-time connection to the company's home base which greatly improves customer service and speeds up billing cycles. Previously the drivers would have to transcribe the information manually and return to the office to submit the data. Now, immediately following a delivery, customer accounts are updated with the amount of fuel delivered and posted directly to their bill. Less labor is required and there is less potential for human error. In addition, if the device ever drops out of range, the software queues changes, and updates as soon as it is back in mobile broadband coverage.

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**Mike Vinciguerra,**  
**Mobile System Administrator,**  
**Eastern Propane & Oil**

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## CASE STUDY: EASTERN PROPANE & OIL

The company opted for Panasonic ProServices deployment support to help alleviate IT resources and streamline the new device rollout. When the Panasonic team arrived on-site, they were able to greatly optimize the server and created a custom Toughpad build that allowed the setup of multiple tablets concurrently in about 30 minutes. “The decision to use the Panasonic ProServices team was one of our best as it saved us time with our initial in-vehicle installations,” said Vinciguerra.

### PRODUCTIVITY AND PROFITABILITY ON THE RISE

“Even though some of our senior executives wanted to consider consumer devices because of price, our organization is very forward thinking and we were able to explain the value of the Panasonic tablet in terms of TCO, reliability and performance,” said Vinciguerra. He revealed that since deploying 250 Toughpad FZ-G1 tablets over the past three years, Eastern Propane has greatly increased efficiency with both delivery and service teams in the field.

The delivery schedule is more automated allowing the company to increase the number of gallons being delivered, while decreasing the number of stops. That efficiency directly improves Eastern Propane & Oil’s bottom line.

The availability of real-time data has boosted customer service and support. Their field team’s productivity and morale has also improved thanks to the new device form factor and reliability in the harsh New England conditions.

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