DEUSA Fleet Success Story: Happy Trash Can

Location: Bozeman/Livingston, MT
Fleet type: Light Duty

Narrative: Happy Trash Can has taken a practical, operations-first approach to adopting electric vehicles within its waste and compost collection services. Operating on consistent, route-based schedules, the company identified early that its daily mileage and predictable service areas made electrification a viable and efficient solution.

When the time came to replace an existing gas-powered truck (that was only getting about 8 mpg), the team evaluated options that could meet the demands of hauling, towing, and daily route completion while also reducing long-term fuel and maintenance costs. Ultimately, they transitioned from a gas-powered Chevrolet Silverado 2500HD to an extended-range electric truck capable of meeting their operational needs.

A key component of this transition was the ability to reliably charge the vehicle. Happy Trash Can installed a home-based Level 2 Autel charger, enabling overnight charging that aligns seamlessly with their operating schedule. The truck is typically charged to 80% overnight, which has

proven sufficient to complete daily routes without interruption. This charging strategy minimizes downtime and ensures the vehicle is ready each morning.

Performance has met or exceeded expectations. The electric truck tows exceptionally well, with drivers noting that it “doesn’t even feel like it’s towing.” While towing a fully loaded dump trailer reduces the range by approximately 50%, the vehicle still comfortably meets route requirements due to the company’s predictable daily mileage. With a smaller collection trailer, the change in efficiency isn’t noticeable.

The decision to electrify was also supported by favorable financing—Happy Trash Can secured the vehicle with 0% interest and no money down through a purchase in Idaho—making the transition financially accessible while reducing upfront capital constraints.

Since deployment in November 2025, the truck has accumulated approximately 17,000 miles, demonstrating consistent reliability in real-world operations. Beyond operational performance, the vehicle has also created unexpected engagement opportunities. Drivers report being frequently stopped by other EV owners—particularly those interested in the growing presence of electric trucks like the Silverado EV—leading to conversations about performance and real-world use.

Customers have also responded positively. Happy Trash Can regularly mentions the use of an electric truck during service, and many customers express enthusiasm about having their compost collected by an EV. This has strengthened customer relationships while reinforcing the company's commitment to forward-thinking, environmentally conscious practices.

Reflecting on the transition, the team is confident in their decision: adopting electric was a meaningful step forward for the business. Based on this experience, Happy Trash Can plans to continue moving toward a fully electric fleet as future replacements arise and is even considering an electric skid-steer.

This case demonstrates how service-based businesses with route consistency and towing needs can successfully integrate electric vehicles when charging, range, and duty cycles are aligned.

Outputs & Outcomes

Outputs:

- Replacement of one gas-powered pickup truck with an extended-range electric truck
- Deployment of one electric work vehicle within a service-based hauling operation
- Installation of a Level 2 home charging system to support overnight charging
- Integration of EV technology into daily waste and compost collection routes

Outcomes:

- Reduction in gasoline use and associated emissions that can harm local citizens' health
- Lower operating costs through elimination of liquid fuel purchases and reduced maintenance
- Demonstrated ability of an electric truck to handle towing and hauling demands, including dump trailer use
- Improved operational efficiency through overnight charging aligned with business hours
- Increased customer engagement and positive brand perception tied to EV use
- Peer-to-peer awareness driven by frequent interactions with other EV drivers

Best Practices & Lessons Learned: Happy Trash Can's experience highlights that electrification can be both practical and beneficial when grounded in real operational realities. By evaluating route predictability, daily mileage, and charging access, the company identified a strong use case for transitioning to electric. Key lessons include:

- Route-based businesses with predictable mileage are strong candidates for EV adoption
- Overnight Level 2 charging is sufficient for daily operations when routes are well-defined
- Electric trucks can meet towing and hauling expectations, though range impacts should be planned for
- Financing options (such as 0% interest and no down payment) can significantly improve feasibility
- EV adoption can enhance customer perception and create organic marketing opportunities
- Starting with one vehicle provides a low-risk pathway toward broader fleet electrification

Overall, Happy Trash Can's approach reflects a thoughtful balance of operational needs, financial considerations, and long-term planning—demonstrating a clear pathway toward full fleet electrification.