

Freedom Drywall, LLC

Hillsboro, OR | Maria Cawley, Owner



BACKGROUND

Back in 2009, the last thing on most entrepreneurs' minds was going into the construction business. But Maria Cawley isn't like most entrepreneurs.

So, when the Great Recession got the better of the construction company where she and her husband, Erick Castillo, worked at the time, they decided to start their own. More accurately, Maria—the sole owner of Freedom Drywall, LLC—decided to start her own. Erick, who handles all the bidding work, was her first hire. Since then, the company has grown to 10 employees and 19 vehicles—including work trucks, vans, trailers, and dump trucks.

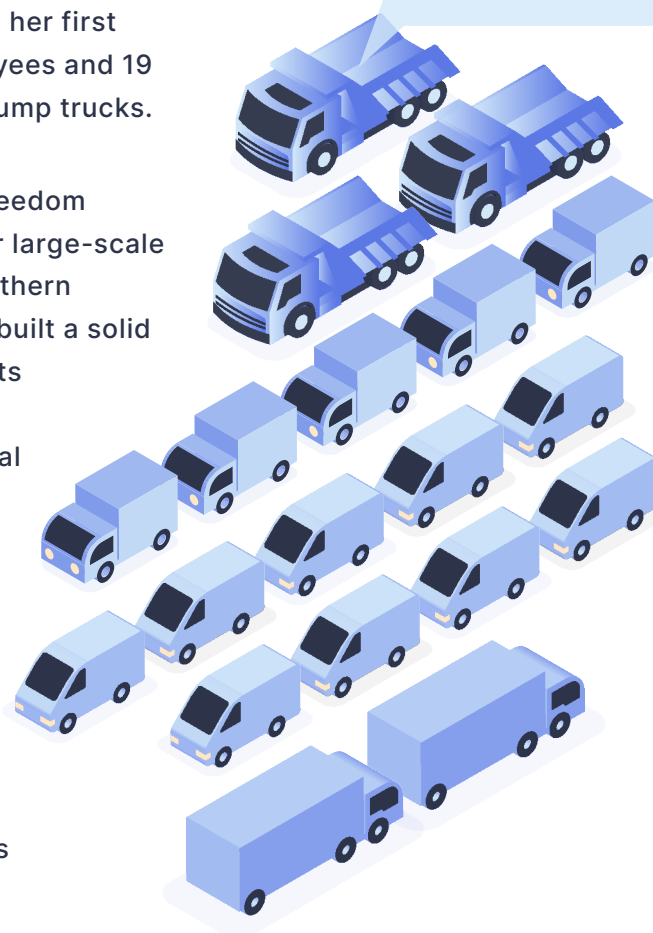
Based in the Portland suburb of Hillsboro, Oregon, Freedom Drywall provides drywall installation and texturing for large-scale construction and remodeling projects throughout northern Oregon and southern Washington. The company has built a solid reputation among local contractors, with repeat clients representing the majority of their business. “I don’t advertise,” Maria says about her steady stream of loyal clients. “I don’t have to pay to get business.”

Unlike many other drywall companies, Freedom Drywall provides end-to-end bids that include everything it takes to complete the job. In other words, they own their piece of the construction process entirely. Furthermore, the company pays higher-than-average wages and provides employees with everything they need to do their jobs—from tools and uniforms to heavy equipment and trucks.

10 employees



19 vehicles



COMPANY FAST FACTS

Name: Freedom Drywall, LLC

Location: Hillsboro, OR

In Business Since: 2009

Spytec GPS Customer Since: 2021

Number of Employees: 10

Number of

Tracking Devices: 21 (all GL300 model)

Location Update

Frequency: Every 60 seconds

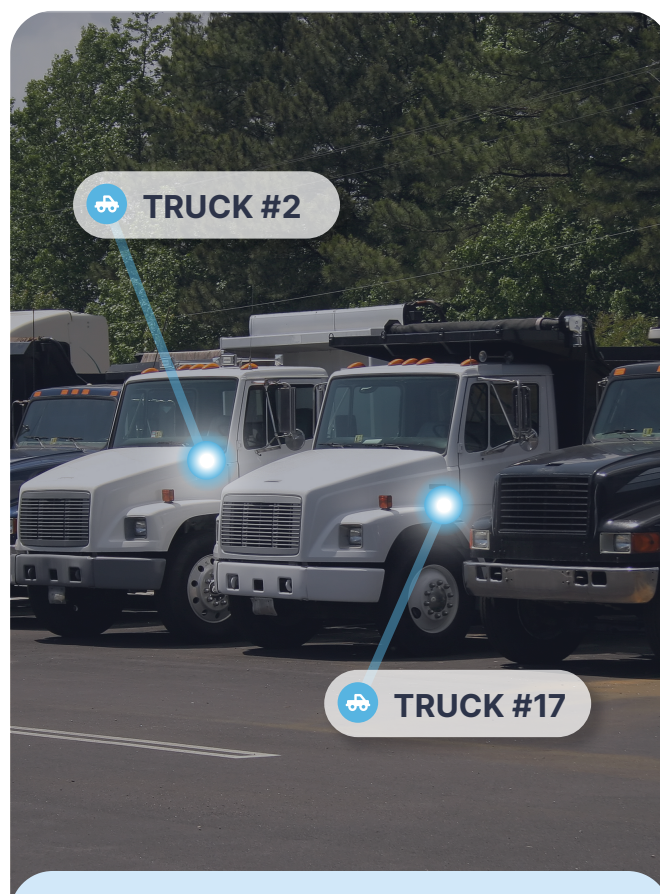
CHALLENGES

Long before Maria started her search for a GPS solution, one of the company's trucks—worth about \$15,000—was stolen from an employee's home. While the police were able to recover the vehicle the next day, the stereo system—as well as the tools being hauled in the back—were gone for good. That's when Maria knew it was time to invest in a GPS tracking system.

Maria also needed a way to monitor large trucks parked beyond the range of security cameras on company property. "We have too many vehicles to park [them all near the shop]," she says.

"Those big trucks—the dump trucks—are our lifeline. But we can't park them by the shop." So even with cameras and an alarm system, Maria relies mainly on her GPS tracking system to make sure all her large trucks and trailers stay where they're supposed to be.

But it wasn't just the threat of asset loss that pushed Maria to invest in GPS technology. She also sensed a growing problem with employees using company vehicles off the clock. "Some of my guys like to take my vehicles on the weekend because they are nice, and I had to put a stop to that," she says. In fact, one Saturday when she was running errands around town, she spotted a Freedom Drywall truck with someone in the



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Maria Cawley
Freedom Drywall, LLC

passenger seat. "That's a problem for us," she says. "We don't do ride-alongs." The reason is simple: it's a major insurance liability. "It should only be driven on the job, and no one [besides employees] should be in the vehicle, because if there's an accident and someone gets hurt, that person is gonna sue me as the business owner."

Some employees were also using company vehicles for side jobs—another major problem, especially considering that Freedom Drywall covers all fuel and maintenance costs for its fleet. But without hard data to prove unauthorized vehicle use, Maria found the situation difficult to manage. Getting her male employees to take her seriously was a whole other issue. In her words, many men in construction "have trouble taking orders from a woman, period."

But thanks to a tip from one of her crew members, that was all about to change.

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CHALLENGES SUMMARY

Freedom Drywall needed a GPS solution that could help them:



Recover stolen assets quickly (especially after the theft of a \$15,000 truck)



Identify and prevent unauthorized employee use of company vehicles



Maintain an airtight record of crew and vehicle whereabouts for liability purposes

SOLUTION

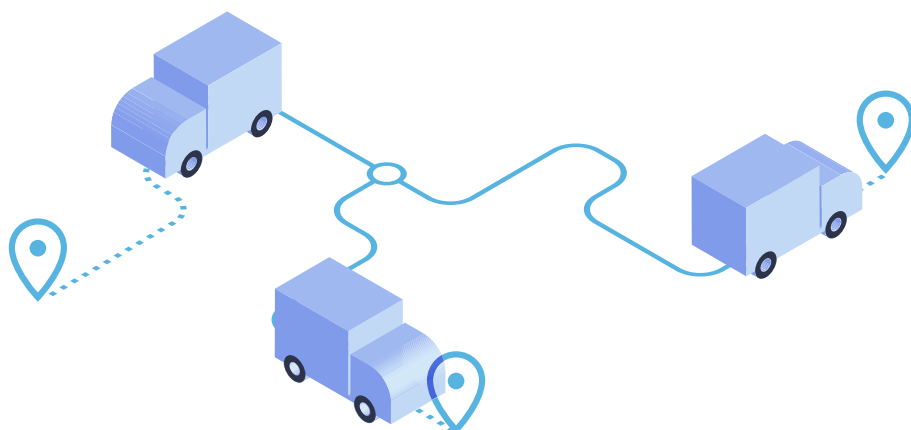
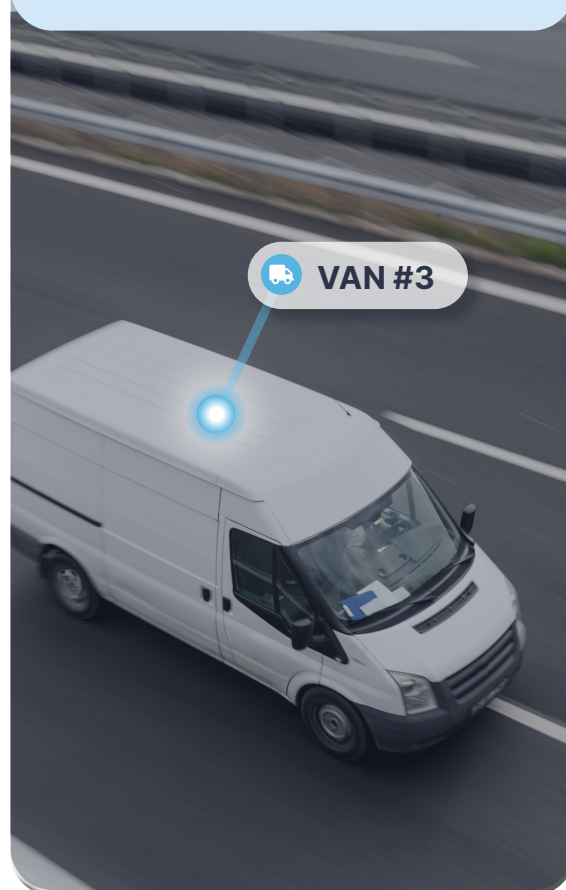
In the spring of 2021, one of Maria's employees came across a Spytec GPS tracker on Amazon and suggested that she take a look. Because Maria wanted to track multiple vehicles and assets, she got in touch with the Spytec GPS team to set up a custom business plan. "If it can move, I need it to be tracked," Maria says.

Today, Maria has a total of 21 Spytec GPS GL300 trackers that help manage Freedom Drywall's fleet of trucks, vans, and trailers. She loves being able to see where all of her vehicles and assets are in real time—with location updates every 60 seconds—right from her computer or smartphone. But she really loves the automated alerts she receives when a tracker leaves a custom boundary or needs to be recharged. "I take care of charging them myself, or I send a message out to the guys when they need to charge their trackers," she says.

At first, her crew members were a bit resistant to using GPS trackers, but they quickly got on board with Maria's push for accountability—and they liked that they didn't have to spend so much time on the phone communicating about schedules and locations. GPS also gives the team extra peace of mind in case a truck breaks down or they get into an accident. "It's a lot to manage 10 people going in different directions, and our trade is rough," Maria says. "There's always something that goes wrong on a job, and you have to respond right away."

**"If it can move,
I need it to be tracked."**

Maria Cawley
Freedom Drywall, LLC



SOLUTION SUMMARY

Freedom Drywall's Spytec GPS solution includes:



21 tracking devices that monitor and manage 19 vehicles and 10 employees



Real-time tracking and live map view from both the desktop and mobile versions of the Spytec GPS software application



Automated alerts for low battery power and when devices move outside of defined boundaries

IMPACT

It didn't take long for Maria's GPS investment to pay off. Two days after installing one of the company's first trackers in her husband's Ford F-350, she discovered the truck had been stolen from the shop. Security camera footage confirmed the theft, and the couple immediately called the police. They logged into the Spytec GPS app and pinpointed the truck's location in minutes. "They stole it and parked it somewhere, but I knew exactly where it was," she says. "The police arrived and confirmed it was our truck, but my husband is not a patient person, so he drove over there. We basically stole our truck back."

Thanks to Spytec GPS, Freedom Drywall avoided a potentially devastating financial blow. "If they had gotten away with it, that would have been 30 grand out the door," Maria says. "That would have been huge. We had just paid it off, and we wouldn't have had the money to replace it right away."

Soon after installing trackers on all company trucks, Maria also saw a noticeable drop in her monthly gas

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expenses. “All the guys have gas cards, and in gas alone we spend about \$3,000 a month,” she says. “Before we started using the trackers, I couldn’t figure out why our gas bill was so high. We were running at almost \$2,000 every two weeks. I knew something was wrong.”

Thanks to GPS data, Maria confirmed her hunch that some crew members were using their trucks for non-work travel—which she quickly nipped in the bud. “What the trackers did for me is give me more control,” she says. “I stopped the abuse of galavanting on the weekends and doing side jobs.”

She has even cut down on risky driving behaviors like speeding, thus improving the safety of her crew out on the road. “If I got a speeding alert, I would send out a group text saying that somebody’s speeding—but I wouldn’t say who it was,” Maria says, thinking back to her early days of using Spytec GPS. Nowadays, she doesn’t send out many speeding texts. “They’re all on a short leash now,” she says with a laugh..

The trackers also armed Maria with objective data her employees couldn’t dispute—and that earned her more respect. “It’s made my life 100% better because now people listen to me,” she says.

That data has come in handy when resolving insurance claims—especially ones that have no merit. In one instance, a driver who took off following a rear-end collision told Maria’s husband—who was the other driver involved—that he was going to call it in as a hit and run. Thinking on her feet, Maria called in the accident first—and had the GPS data to prove that her husband had not fled the scene, as the other driver claimed. “People are always looking for free money—greedy people trying to make a buck off small businesses,” Maria says. “Well, I’m going to beat you to the documentation. I’m going to think faster than you.”

One piece of advice Maria would give any small business owner: Own your documentation. “In today’s world, small businesses like us have to make sure we’re doing everything the right way,” she says. “If something happens on a job, like an accident, I document it myself and put it in the file so I can come back to it if there’s ever a situation where I need to have my own documentation.”



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In Maria's eyes, though, the best thing about her experience with Spytec GPS, hands-down, is the service. "The service is outstanding," she says. "I'm high-maintenance, to be honest, and I love the service. I would recommend Spytec GPS to anybody that asked me."

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IMPACT SUMMARY

Since implementing Spytec GPS, Freedom Drywall has:



Recovered a stolen truck
worth \$30,000.



Reduced monthly fuel
costs by 25%.



Stopped employee use of
company vehicles for side
jobs and non-work travel.



Improved driver safety by
taking corrective action
based on speeding alerts.



Refuted false insurance
claims using GPS data.

**Want to see all the ways Spytec GPS can save your business
time and money?**

Request a free personalized demo at spytec.com/demo