

Reducing tyre fly-tipping using smart tagging

An initiative to encourage garages and tyre retailers to sign up to a scheme using SmartWater (smart tagging) to mark and trace tyres found in fly-tips.

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Key details

Does it work?	Promising
Focus	Prevention
Topic	Anti-social behaviour Crime prevention Neighbourhood crime
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Region	West Midlands
Partners	Police Business and commerce Local authority
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	March 2022
Completion date	March 2023

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	General public Offenders Victims Workforce

Aim

To reduce the number of incidents of tyre fly-tippings by encouraging garages and tyre retailers to sign up to a smart tag scheme.

Intended outcome

This initiative intended to:

- improve relationships between partner agencies involved (police, local authority, environment agency, fire service)
- use a problem-solving approach to implement an innovative approach to the problem and support long-term sustainable goals to reduce fly-tipping
- improve the confidence and satisfaction of the local population that the police regard fly-tipping as a crime and will not overlook it
- reduce the impact on the environment through a reduction in the number of tyre fly-tipping incidents
- prevent opportunities for serious and organised crime associated with fly-tipping
- reduce calls for service related to fly-tipping
- reduce the use of illegal waste carriers
- reduce the costs associated with removal of fly-tips
- increase levels of police intelligence

Description

The project marked the tyres with SmartWater to:

- identify who was contracted to dispose of them via the garages
- investigate why and how they were illegally fly-tipped

This approach was also used to prevent garages being approached by illegal waste carriers. Signage encouraging garages and tyre retailers to sign up to the project. The use of SmartWater was used with the intention to reduce fly-tipping.

The project was implemented using a multi-agency targeted enforcement strategy (MATES) approach. Police officers and local authority enforcement officers visited local garages to recruit them to the scheme. Garage staff signed up for free online training sessions about exploitation and vulnerability (to address the organised crime aspects of the project). This process used police and crime commissioner (PCC) funded exploitation and vulnerability trainers, so was free for the garages.

Garages were given a red/amber/green (RAG) rating to indicate their level of engagement with the project. The visit to the garage was logged on a project database shared with local authority staff. This was then used by an external security service organisation to produce regular progress reports.

Further visits were made to the garages to:

- assess compliance with and adherence to the process
- gather intelligence

Compliance and adherence to the process were logged in the database.

Local authority staff led investigations into the source of all tyre fly-tips found during the project.

Tyre tagging solutions and signage produced within the project were funded by the Office of the PCC, who provided £10,000.

Activity other than the exploitation and vulnerability training was provided by local authority enforcement officers. They worked alongside rural and business police constables during their duty time and around other commitments. Therefore, no overtime or other expenses were required.

Evaluation

An evaluation was led by academics from the University Of Worcester. A mixed-method approach was used to examine:

- whether the project was implemented as planned
- the impacts of the initiative

Specifically, this involved analysing crime and incident data and project implementation data. Surveys were also conducted with participating businesses and operational staff.

It appears from the data available that the project has been successful in terms of two of its objectives:

1. reducing tyre fly-tipping (possibly)
2. improving engagement with garage businesses

However, the conclusion that fly-tipping has been reduced must be viewed in the context of the lack of available local authority data, and a low response rate to the surveys. This means that this conclusion can be only tentative and partial. There is insufficient evidence to show that the reduction in fly-tipping is because of the implementation of the project.

Most operational staff who responded to the survey felt the main benefit of the project was the ability to build better relationships with garages. They felt that all the garages they visited were keen to cooperate with the project and the reaction was largely supportive. Most garages already had disposal arrangements in place. All garages in the businesses survey were confident that their waste tyres were correctly disposed.

Operational staff believed there were a range of benefits to businesses. For example, being seen to be part of a community that cares about the environment. Businesses believed that benefits included:

- peace of mind in terms of tyre disposal
- knowledge that they are helping the environment

Almost all businesses that stated they were compliant with the project were clear on procedures, and felt that tagging tyres was not onerous. However, checks were made for tyre tagging in only 15% of tyre-tipping incidents.

Overall impact

Across the West Mercia police force area, 105 garages participated in the project. By December 2022, 94 (90%) of these had been rated green, eight as amber, and one as red, with two still to be given a rating.

The project appears to have been implemented in line with the project plan, according to operational staff. There was a 97% success rate in the sign-up of garages to the project. Responses from garages were mostly positive, supportive and compliant. The majority complied with the requirements of the project and achieved 'green' status by the end of the project period.

Therefore, it appears from the data available that the project has been successful in terms of two of its objectives:

1. reducing tyre fly-tipping (possibly)
2. improving engagement with garage businesses

Both operational staff and businesses believed that the project was effective because it holds businesses accountable and tyres are traceable.

Learning

The following learning and recommendations were identified.

- According to operational staff, some garages were not compliant. This was put down to time pressures, cost of disposal and concern about the process if a marked tyre was found. The latter was also corroborated as a concern by businesses in this survey. Businesses felt that tracing tyres back to the person who is responsible for dumping may be difficult.
- Both operational staff and businesses believed that the project did not always target the correct businesses. Operational staff were also concerned that the project was not mandated.
- Visiting garages may be time-consuming for police officers who work across large areas.
- Training was not attended by some businesses.
- One business was not able to procure more SmartWater.
- There appears to be inconsistency in record-keeping on fly-tipping by local authorities. This would need to be addressed before continuing the intervention.

- Publicity was identified as a key mechanism for the success of property-marking schemes. A media campaign was run alongside the project to raise awareness and provide additional deterrence.

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