

# ARE YOUR TECHNICIANS

## WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT THEIR WORKPLACES

GOVERNMENT FLEET'S EXCLUSIVE SURVEY REVEALS HOW FLEET TECHNICIANS FEEL ABOUT THEIR JOBS AND WHAT MAKES THEM STAY. FIND OUT WHAT THEY'RE PROUD OF AND WHAT THEY WANT YOU TO CHANGE. **BY THI DAO**

### AT A GLANCE

Fleet employees who responded to the survey said:

- 20% plan to retire within the next five years.
- 48% feel there is no room for advancement at their job.
- 53% said they would not or probably would not leave their organization for another similar position with higher pay.
- 51% said they're most proud of the expertise and experience at their facility.

What keeps most government employees at their jobs? Most would say the stability and benefits, but for some government agencies, these benefits are slowly being reduced and there are increasing concerns of job security.

At a time when many public agencies are cutting back their budgets, some fleet agencies are feeling threatened by outsourcing, lowered benefits, furlough days resulting in lower pay, not to mention salary freezes. Fleet managers are worried about employ-

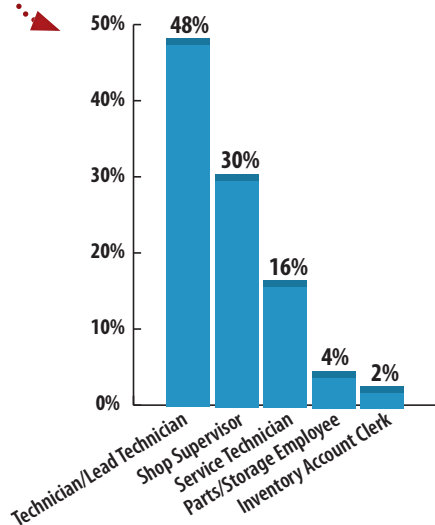
ee retention and the retirement of the aging work force, resulting in loss of skilled veteran technicians. So are fleet technicians happy, or do they want out? What's keeping them at their jobs, and can you do anything about it?

Government Fleet conducted a survey in May asking fleet employees on the shop floor about their satisfaction level, concerns, and ways management can improve their jobs. One hundred and eighty qualified fleet employees from agencies in 24 states responded to the survey.

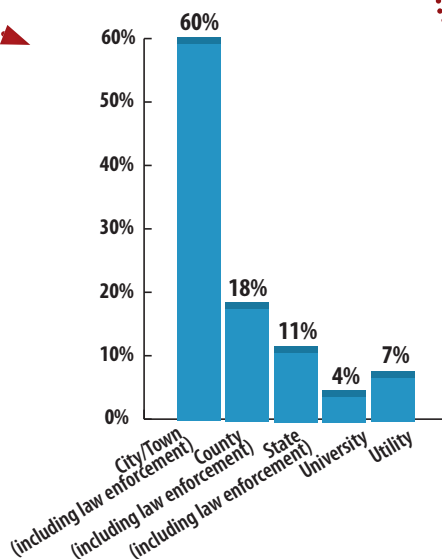
Survey results show that 86% of fleet em-

## THE 2012 TECHNICIAN SURVEY

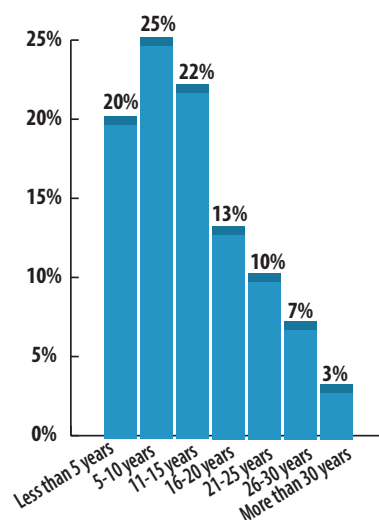
### WHO THEY ARE



### WHERE THEY WORK



### YEARS TO RETIREMENT



# HAPPY?

## AND WHAT THEY WANT YOU TO DO ABOUT IT



Employees enjoy coming to work most or all of the time. Yet 47% of respondents said they would definitely or probably leave their agency if they were offered another position with slightly better compensation or comparable benefits.

Benefits and job stability are the top reasons why fleet employees stay at their jobs, and only 40% of fleet employees cite compensation as a factor. Higher compensation, not surprisingly, tops the wish list for changes, with some survey respondents stating they hadn't received a pay increase in five to six years.

The following pages go into the details of the survey, including employee sugges-

tions, in their own words, about how fleet management can help them.

### What They Like and Don't Like

GF reached out to a few respondents who wanted to discuss their thoughts further, keeping their responses anonymous.

Fleet employees state that they enjoy their jobs and the new technologies that make their jobs a continually evolving process. "In automotive repair, nothing is a carbon copy," a fleet technician in Texas said. "Every one of them presents a little different challenge, and I enjoy the challenge."

Other things technicians and fleet supervisors said they liked about their oper-

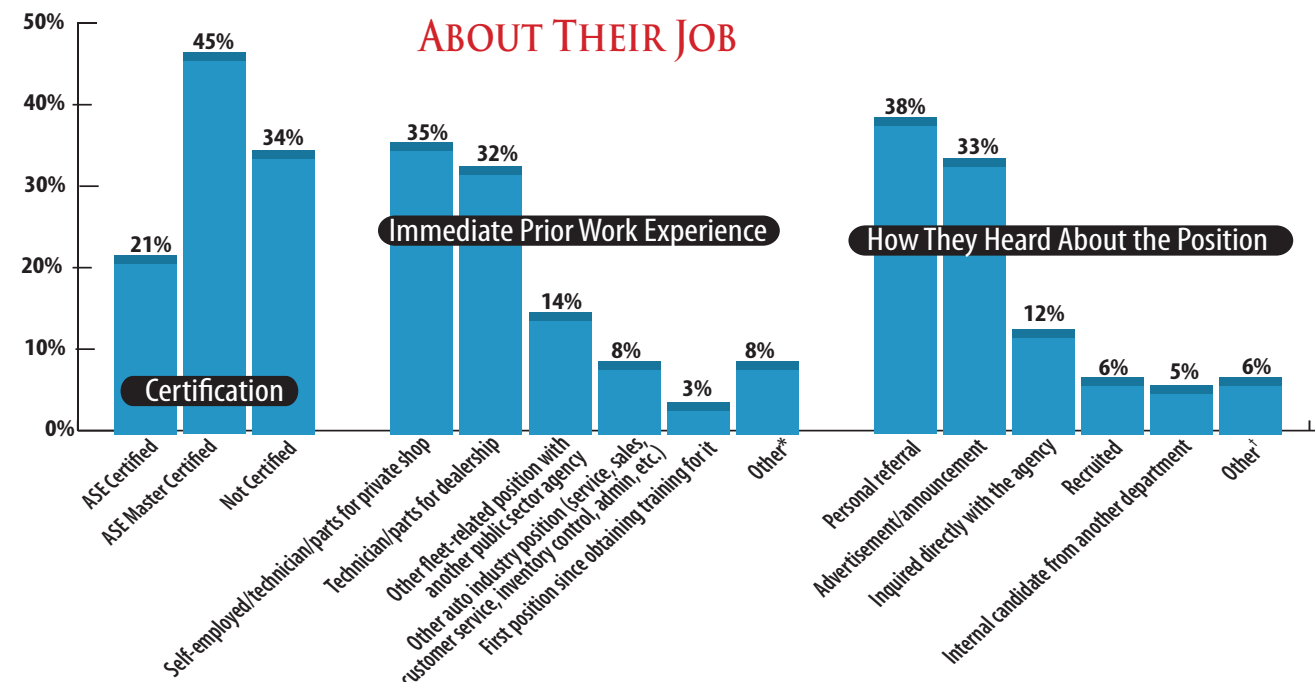
ations include newer facilities, tools, and equipment if they have them.

However, the job they enjoy does take a toll. The Texas technician, who is 63, said one problem he has is the "congestion underneath the vehicles. With my body getting a little aged, it's hard to get in there."

As for management, he said, "they're looking for a way to work smarter, not necessarily harder." He noted that management does often know what technicians need but aren't able to quickly acquire things such as costly up-to-date diagnostic equipment.

While management knows what's going on in some fleets, one Southern California-based shop supervisor said: "Management

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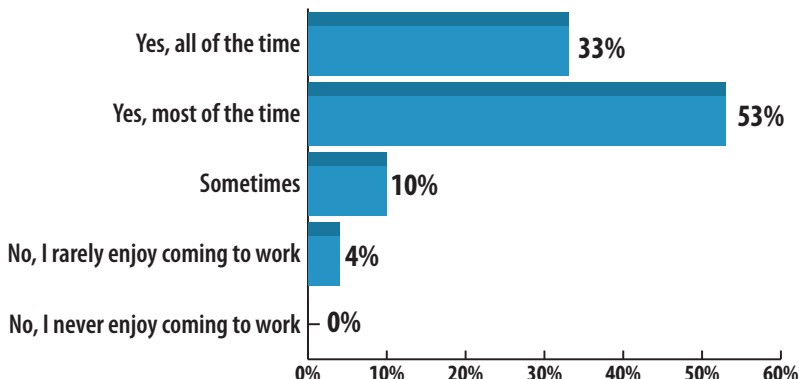
\* OTHER INCLUDES WORK WITH THE MILITARY OR PRIVATE FLEET, AND EQUIPMENT OPERATION.

† OTHER INCLUDES WORD OF MOUTH, INTERNSHIP AND TRAINING PROGRAMS, STAFFING AGENCIES, AND NETWORKING THROUGH INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS.

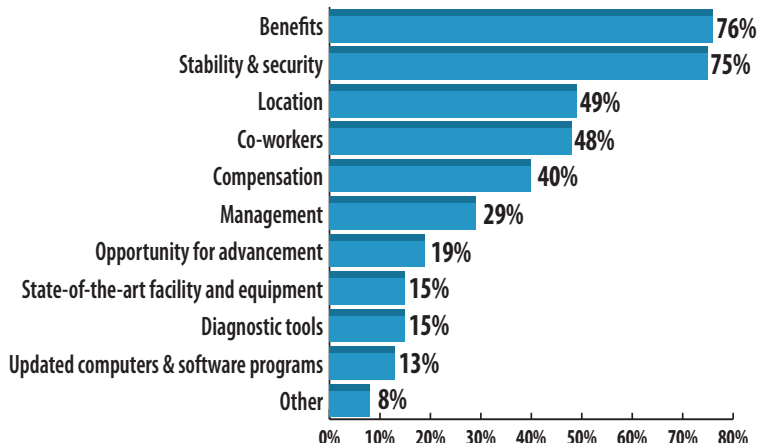
## WHAT THEY THINK

# THE 2012 TECHNICIAN SURVEY

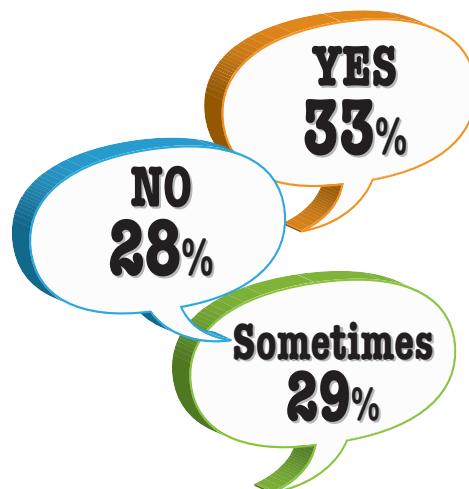
### Do you enjoy coming to work?



### What keeps you at your job? (More than one response possible)



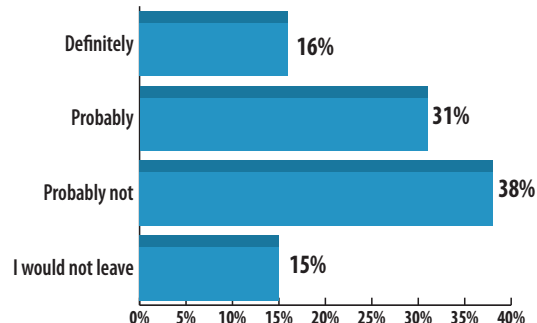
Do you feel technicians and parts employees working for private companies receive more compensation/benefits than what you receive as a public sector fleet employee?



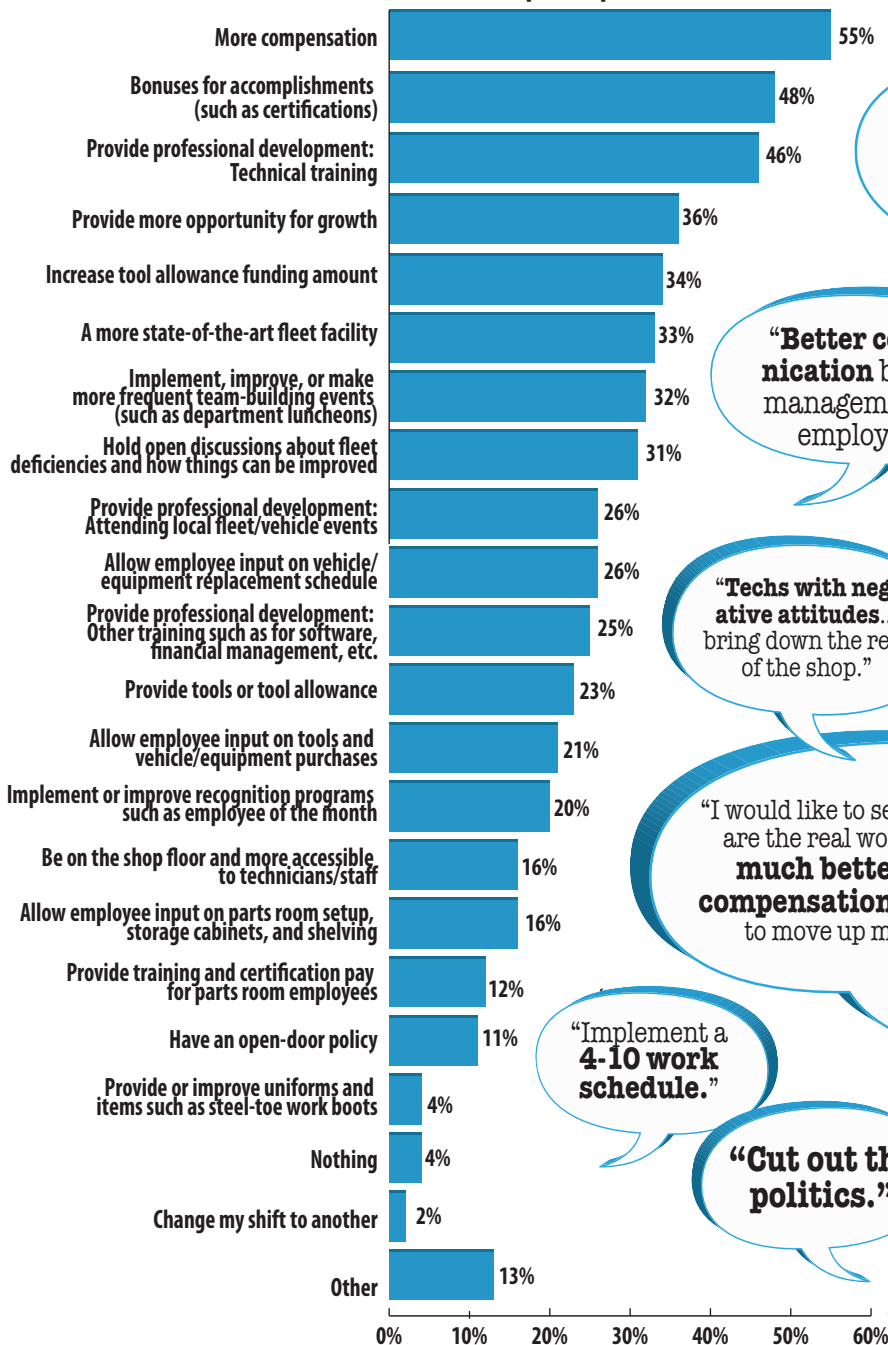
### What They Said:



If you are approached by another agency or company for another position with slightly better compensation and comparable benefits, how likely are you to leave your current position?



## What can fleet management can do to improve your job? (more than one response possible)



## What They Said:

I have too many duties as shop supervisor. "A shop foreman would really be helpful to **take some of the weight off my shoulders.**"

"**Better communication** between management and employees."

"**Involve employees** in everything that affects them."

"**Techs with negative attitudes...** bring down the rest of the shop."

"**Have a real open-door policy** – don't just say you have one. Provide results from discussions."

"I would like to see the guys who are the real workers receive **much better pay and compensation** and the ability to move up more easily."

"**Treat technicians as equals** to the office staff."

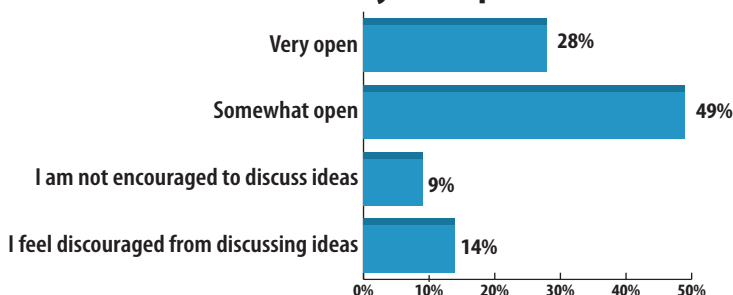
"Pay people for their **ability and production.**"

"**Implement a 4-10 work schedule.**"

"**Cut out the politics.**"

I want to "not have to go to technician training on my **personal time.**"

## How open is management to your input and ideas?



## Do you feel there is room for advancement at your position?

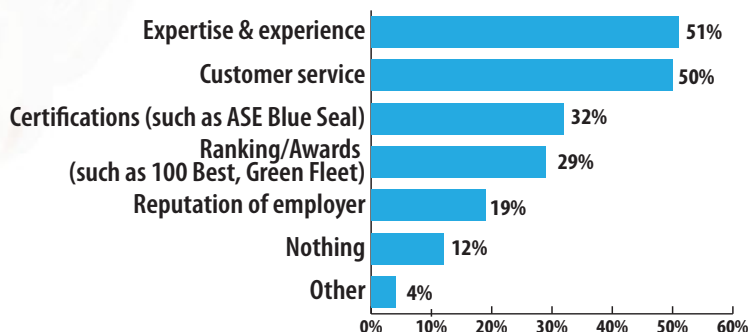
**YES 32%**

**NO 48%**

**Unsure 20%**

[ technicians ]

### What are you most proud of in your fleet organization? (more than one response possible)



### What They Said:

**"Getting things done."**

"Our fleet department **works as a team** taking pride in our work and facility."

**"Diversity"**

"Everyone watches out for each other and is willing to **help** one another."

"Never have I had a job before that I enjoyed and took so much **pride** in. I plan to retire from this job. I have never been able to say that before."

isn't really in tune to daily goings-on of the shop environment and what happens on a day-to-day basis. When there are decisions being made regarding anything that involves work environment, these decisions are being made without the input of people it actually affects."

A senior parts technician for a Northern California agency said his parts department had been cut down from three people to one, meaning significantly increased workload for him. His biggest problem is "not ever catching up, not ever finishing," he said.

One change an East Coast utility mechanic noticed from his days working at a dealership and at private garages was that things moved quicker. He added that it's also hard to show appreciation for his team "without running into union issues."

Since being promoted to a lead mechanic position, he has been trying to create a team environment in the workplace. "I tried to identify the strengths of each individual. There's always some [task] guys like to do



more than others,” he said. “I tried to empower them to take charge of others...to empower them to try to show what they’ve learned to other guys, which gives them a sense of accomplishment.”

As for benefits and job security, the Southern California shop supervisor said: “I used to feel pretty good, but now that’s starting to go away with negotiations, where they’re taking away some of the benefits we used to have.” He began worrying about job security a couple of years ago. “I didn’t used to,” he said.

### From the Perspective of Fleet Managers

When fleet managers are facing salary freezes themselves, and as numerous public agencies are cutting budgets and not filling open positions, there’s little chance of them being able to ask for salary increases for fleet staff. Sam Lamerato, CPFP, fleet superintendent for the City of Troy, Mich.; Charlie Caudill II, CPFP, fleet manager for the City of Yuma, Ariz.; and J.D. Schulte, fleet manager for the City of Moline, Ill., offer the following suggestions for improving employee morale and retention:

- Talk to technicians about climbing the management ladder.
- Try to provide additional compensation for certifications such as ASE or ASE Master.
- Provide training manuals and guides for testing, available for checkout.
- Pay for ASE certification testing.
- Allow employees to adjust their schedules on ASE testing day so they don’t have to take time off.
- Publicize employee accomplishments such as certifications through City-wide newsletters.
- Provide clean uniforms and steel-toe boots, as well as winter clothing and gloves.
- Provide or offer to pay for training seminars on management skills, computer classes, etc.
- Confer with fleet supervisors when making decisions where they can provide input, such as which technician to send to a specific training program.
- Control rumors by giving employees the facts during meetings.
- Send technicians out to vendor

training sessions held nearby. Offer to host these events in exchange for free training so more technicians can attend.

- Allow second- and third-shift employees the option of working a flexible schedule, such as four 10-hour nights.
- Bring back vendor-provided giveaways collected at trade shows to

the shop and distribute them to those who weren’t there. ★

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#### SOURCES:

- **Charlie Caudill II**, CPFP, fleet manager, City of Yuma, Ariz.  
E-mail: charlie.caudill@yumaaz.gov
  - **Sam Lamerato**, CPFP, fleet superintendent, City of Troy, Mich.  
E-mail: lameratosp@troymi.gov
  - **J.D. Schulte**, fleet manager, City of Moline, Ill.  
E-mail: jschulte@moline.il.us
  - Numerous fleet technicians, supervisors, parts employees, etc. who responded to the survey and contributed to this story.
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