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What It's Like to Be a WM Driver: A Career Behind the Wheel

WM drivers operate advanced vehicles, serve customers and communities, prioritize safety and often build long-term careers with opportunities for growth.

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Anna Harries, a WM residential driver trainer in Germantown, Wisconsin, helps serve customers while mentoring the next generation of drivers.

What makes WM driving careers unique?

- More than **24,000 drivers** serve customers across North America
- Drivers build long-term careers, with an **average tenure of more than eight years**
- Nearly **3,900 drivers have 20** or more years of service
- **72%** of leadership roles are filled from frontline positions

Long before many people start their morning commute, WM drivers are already on the road serving 5.6 million customers across neighborhoods, businesses, hospitals and construction sites throughout North America.

They provide an essential service that helps keep communities clean, safe and running smoothly, but their work goes beyond collecting waste and recycling. They are safety professionals, problem solvers, trainers, mentors and trusted faces in the communities they serve.

For Anna Harries, a residential driver trainer, and Wayne Schneider, a roll-off driver, driving is more than a job. It's a career built on service, responsibility and pride in the work they do every day.

Wayne Schneider joined WM 21 years ago after seeing a phone number on the side of a dumpster. Today, he helps mentor new drivers while continuing to serve customers in roll-off operations.

Different routes, shared purpose

While Anna and Wayne serve different customers, they both say safety is the foundation of the job.

For Anna, safety starts with routine. As a trainer, she encourages new drivers to make safe practices part of everything they do.

"Safety is at the forefront of what we do," Anna said. "If you aren't making safety a habit, that's going to create a problem for you."

Wayne takes a similar approach.

"You've always got to pay attention and keep your head on a swivel," he said. "Safety is a major part of what we do."

That mindset starts before the trucks leave the yard. Drivers begin each day by reviewing safety topics, route information and operational updates before inspecting their vehicles and heading out to serve customers.

Safety starts before the truck leaves the yard. WM drivers participate in daily morning meetings to review safety topics, route information and operational updates.

What is a typical day like for a WM driver?

Anna spends her day navigating neighborhoods and serving residential customers. One of her favorite aspects of the job is the independence that comes with managing her own route. While every day follows a schedule, no two days feel exactly the same.

Her truck, nicknamed "Black Lightning," serves as both her workspace and her sanctuary during the day.

"This is my baby. This is my office," Anna said. "It's my peace."

From tree-lined streets to unexpected wildlife sightings, Anna enjoys the variety. The time behind the wheel gives her a chance to recharge before returning home to her busy family.

Wayne's day looks very different.

As a roll-off driver, he services construction sites, businesses and industrial customers, delivering and picking up large containers throughout the day. Routes often include multiple customer locations, trips to disposal facilities and navigating tight spaces.

"Some stops are easier than others," Wayne said. "Compactors tend to be a little harder than an open-top box."

While no two days are the same, weather often determines how difficult a shift will be.

"Good weather always makes the day easier," Wayne said. "When it starts raining, snowing or getting really windy, that's when things get harder."

Roll-off drivers regularly work outdoors in challenging conditions. Rain can turn job sites muddy, wind can make securing tarps difficult, and cleanup work sometimes requires drivers to get out of the cab and handle debris by hand.

Click here to watch a WM Smart Truck® program vehicle in action:

Your browser does not support the video tag.

How has garbage truck technology evolved?

Today's collection vehicles use technology that has transformed the WM driver experience. Anna operates an automated residential side-loader with a zero-radius arm controlled by a joystick.

"My truck is fully automatic," Anna said. "So, I'm in there and it's like I'm playing a game all day."

The comparison makes her laugh, but the technology serves a serious purpose. The automated arm allows drivers to safely collect hundreds of carts each day without manually handling heavy containers.

"It makes it so much easier," Anna said. "You can move so much more efficiently through a route, and it's way safer because you're not picking up any type of cans. These cans can be heavy."

Wayne has witnessed a major transformation during his 21-year career.

"When I started, we had paper tickets. We didn't have GPS. We had actual maps you flipped through," he said.

Today, drivers use tablets, routing technology and real-time communication tools that keep them connected with dispatch throughout the day.

Cameras and vehicle safety systems help support safe, efficient operations. Across WM's fleet, over 5,000 trucks are equipped with [Advanced Driver Assistance Systems, including collision-mitigation radar and blind-spot detection. Also, AI-enabled driver cameras are deployed in 90% of the collection fleet.](#)

Wayne recalled an accident in which video footage showed another driver ran a red light.

"The camera recorded exactly what happened."

Wayne has also seen changes in the trucks themselves. Early in his career, some vehicles lacked air conditioning. Today, newer trucks offer improved comfort and operate on cleaner fuel technologies.

"Many of the trucks are newer now," he said. "They incorporate updated technology and fuel systems."

A majority of WM's trucks run on compressed natural gas (CNG). These CNG trucks can be allocated renewable natural gas, which can be produced from captured landfill gas, helping turn waste into a resource.

Compressed natural gas fueling stations help power WM's growing collection fleet. In 2025, approximately 13,590 WM collection vehicles operated on alternative fuels, with 93% of alternative fuel consumption allocated to renewable natural gas.

How do drivers connect with their communities?

Drivers often become familiar faces in the communities they serve.

For Anna, that means building relationships with customers along her residential route, especially children who look forward to seeing the truck each week.

"I love the kids," she said. "They get so excited."

She also pays attention to customers who may need a little extra assistance.

"I care about my customers," Anna said. "If I see someone having trouble, I'll get out and help. Maybe I'll bring a cart back to the garage for them or help however I can."

Those interactions are part of what makes the work meaningful.

Wayne describes community impact in a different way.

When severe flooding struck Wisconsin, he and his fellow drivers volunteered additional time to support cleanup efforts.

"A lot of places were devastated," Wayne recalled. "We got a lot of dumpsters out there and were able to clean up a lot of the mess."

For Wayne, the importance of the job comes down to the impact waste collection has on everyday life.

"What we do matters," Wayne said. "It can help keep the rodents away and debris from blowing around, and can help keep the city clean and beautiful."

What skills do WM drivers need to succeed?

Neither Anna nor Wayne sugarcoat the realities of the job.

"It's not for everybody," Wayne said.

Patience, he says, is essential.

"You'll get put into some tight, tight spots," Wayne said. "Stuff always happens, so you just have to work your way through it."

As a trainer, Anna often gives new drivers the same advice.

"Don't expect everything to come to you all at once. Take your time. Be safe," she said. "Rushing gets you nowhere but an incident, an accident or injury."

A career that keeps moving forward

For both Anna and Wayne, driving at WM has become more than a job. It has created opportunities to grow professionally, take on new responsibilities and help develop the next generation of drivers.

Demand for skilled drivers remains strong across the U.S. economy. According to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), approximately 237,600 openings for heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers are projected each year through 2034. The projection highlights the important role transportation professionals play in keeping communities and businesses moving.

After 3½ years with WM, Anna Harries says the independence, variety and customer connections make every day behind the wheel rewarding.

As a trainer, Anna tailors her coaching style to the way each new driver learns.

"Everybody's not the same," she said. "I've had some who learn more from doing it, and I've had some who learn more from watching."

Wayne also takes pride in helping new drivers succeed.

"I answer questions all day from new drivers," he said.

Both say helping others build confidence behind the wheel is one of the most rewarding parts of the job.

Wayne points to several reasons he has stayed with WM for more than two decades.

"Good money, good benefits, good people," he said. "There's a lot of room for advancement if you want to move up or move into different departments."

But when it comes down to it, the reason he's stayed is simple.

"I love this place," Wayne said. "It's a great place to work."

Part of that pride is personal.

"Making my father proud," Wayne said. "He never knew I'd work this long at a place."

Anna also came to WM for the pay and stability.

"I'm going to retire eventually," she joked. "I can't stay forever."

Until then, she sees herself continuing to grow at WM.

"There are just so many opportunities to keep going forward," she said.

Ready to Explore Driver Careers at WM?

From residential collection and roll-off operations to specialized transportation services, WM offers driving careers that can provide stability, career development opportunities and the chance to make a difference.

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