

Drivers of the Year

This award honors drivers who represent the best of the industry for the example they demonstrate in safety every day. They operate trucks in a safe and responsible manner and have outstanding performance records. Their examples have advanced overall safety, providing a positive image of the waste and recycling industry. We are proud to recognize this year's honorees, as they truly embrace safety as a priority and commitment to industry excellence.

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National Commercial Winner

Christopher Girard, *GFL Environmental Inc.*



The ideal candidate of a nominated driver should exemplify safety, be a joy to work with and serve as a role model for the new drivers coming up through the ranks. Additionally, this individual should demonstrate a generous spirit and selfless attitude outside of work. With these criteria in mind, we unanimously agreed on Christopher Girard. In addition to his remarkable safety

performance, Girard consistently does his job and goes above and beyond whenever asked. He is known for helping with open routes and never complains.

Off work, he is a volunteer captain and EMT with the London Mills Fire Protection District, and training aided him in saving a woman from drowning while off-duty.

National Commercial Honorable Mentions



Ed Lee
Republic Services Inc.



Dave Mayers
Republic Services Inc.



Alfonso Retamoza
Republic Services Inc.



Jeffery Sievers
GFL Environmental Inc.

National Residential Winner

Antonio Carranza, *Republic Services Inc.*



Antonio Carranza's hard work, strong safety record and dedication to the company is only part of why he was given this award. He always strives to take care of his customers and meet their needs, doing everything he can to make them happy each day. So much so that the mayor of Chula Vista, California, and a member of city council

wrote letters on his behalf. After 42 years as a truck driver, he never imagined that a trash truck driver like himself would receive such a great honor. As Carranza nears retirement, he can't think of a better way to hang up his keys.

National Residential Honorable Mentions



Paul Borgert
Republic Services Inc.



Sergio Delatorre
Republic Services Inc.



Lance Thomas
Republic Services Inc.



Phillip Smith
Republic Services Inc.



Mike Zielaskowski
GFL Environmental Inc.

National Roll-Off Winner

Rodney Darden, *WM*



Rodney Darden was awarded Driver of the Year because of his dedication to safety, reliability and outstanding service on the road. Being nominated for this award is an incredible honor, as it showed that his hard work and commitment are recognized and valued by his peers and company.

Winning this award fills Darden with immense pride and gratitude, knowing that his efforts have made a positive impact. This motivates Darden to continue upholding the highest standards of his profession.

National Roll-Off Honorable Mentions



Dan Bartelt
GFL Environmental Inc.



Galdino Castelan
Republic Services Inc.



Jason Jewell
GFL Environmental Inc.



Lawrence Prezioso
Republic Services Inc.



Robert Roseberry
Republic Services Inc.

Drivers of the Year (cont.)

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National Safety Sensitive Winner

Neil Hansen, *GFL Environmental Inc.*



With this year's introduction of the Safety Sensitive Driver category as part of NWR's Driver/Operator of the Year Awards, award eligibility has expanded to a larger group of hardworking, well-deserving employees in the waste and recycling industry whose contributions are vital to the success of our operations. So,

when this opportunity came along, GFL immediately thought of Neil Hansen. Hansen is safe, takes care of his equipment and takes pride in doing a great job for our customers, working to ensure he knows all of them by name. He also is friendly, has a great attitude, goes above and beyond and exhibits an unselfish attitude toward his family and friends.

National Safety Sensitive Honorable Mentions



Clayton Bland
GFL Environmental Inc.



Daniel Korb
GFL Environmental Inc.



Renato Ramirez
Republic Services Inc.



Richard Sutton
GFL Environmental Inc.



Daniel Woodin
GFL Environmental Inc.

Regional Commercial Winner

Frank Corl, *Casella Waste Systems*



For over 30 years, Frank Corl has been committed to outstanding service and customer satisfaction. His dedication goes beyond simply completing his route—he provides a positive experience for those he serves, ensures their needs are met and doesn't hesitate to lend a hand when a fellow driver needs to finish a route.

Regional Commercial Honorable Mentions



Quincy Bundage
Recology



Juan Caraballo
Casella Waste Systems



Odilon Rosales
LRS

Regional Residential Winner

Zac Ramsey, *Recology*



Zac Ramsey, a residential collection driver for Recology, is a one-man tour de force. He picks up and empties every residential refuse bin in the city of Arcata, a Northern California community of 19,000 residents, tipping 1,000 bins a day, five days a week. Ramsey also maintains an outstanding safety record—no accidents, no injuries.

Regional Residential Honorable Mentions



David Barbagelata
Recology



Jaime Blanco
Recology



Jose Duran
Recology

Regional Roll-Off Winner

Luis Gonzalez, *Recology*

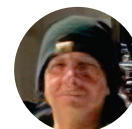


Luis Gonzalez has been a refuse collection driver in San Francisco for 45 years. He makes up to 70 debris box deliveries, repairs and exchanges per week. Driving a large truck to collect and transport San Francisco's refuse presents challenges, and he meets them with caution and true skill.

Regional Roll-Off Honorable Mentions



Mike Gunter
Recology



Daniel Hale
Casella Waste Systems



Rigoberto Lopez
Recology

Drivers of the Year (cont.)

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Regional Safety Sensitive Winner

Melvin Mello III, *Recology*



Melvin Mello III is a long-haul transfer truck driver and backup dispatcher for Recology. As a skilled, professional driver, he has a profound respect for the truck he operates, performing all pre- and post-trip checks and regular maintenance checks and keeping up with all safety expectations during his trips from San Francisco to the company's landfill and compost facility. Mello frequently volunteers with the annual Half Moon Bay Pumpkin Festival and many other community events.

Regional Safety Sensitive Honorable Mentions



Mike Burian
Recology



Miguel Garcia
Recology



Rod McAlavey
Recology

Local Member Winner

John Griffin, *All Waste Inc.*



John Griffin has dedicated 30 years to the waste industry, maintaining an impeccable record with no incidents. Consistently demonstrating a commitment to safety, Griffin understands that each day on the road presents new challenges and there is no room for complacency. This award honors his years of striving to be the best in his field while always prioritizing safety—for both himself and others.

Public Sector Winner

Israel Vazquez, *City of Charlotte*



In 2021, Israel Vazquez was hired as a sanitation equipment operator senior within the city's solid waste department. He has maintained an excellent driving history and sets high expectations for his coworkers to follow, especially relating to adherence to the department's safety initiatives, while always upholding strong work integrity and job performance.



Operator of the Year

This award recognizes heavy equipment operators, the unsung heroes of our industry. Operator of the Year nominees operate a wide variety of equipment, including bulldozers, front-end loaders and compactors in a safe and effective manner. All nominees possess expertise and precision in operating heavy equipment and exemplify the best our industry has to offer.

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Operator Winner

James Reynolds, *WM*



This year, James "Jim" Reynolds will celebrate 33 years with WM. Throughout his career, he has taken on numerous responsibilities, all while excelling in his current role as heavy equipment operator at the Lake View Landfill in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Reynolds was nominated for the Operator of the Year award for the value he brings to the team and WM. He embodies the company's commitments and values, consistently striving to achieve success with integrity and always ensuring his work is done safely.

With his deep knowledge, extensive experience and broad skill set, Reynolds has become a valuable mentor for new employees.

"Winning this award is certainly one of the top events in my life," Reynolds says, expressing gratitude for these efforts being noticed.

Operator of the Year Honorable Mentions



Will Baugus
WM



Cristian Ramirez
GFL Environmental Inc.



Dennis Huey
WM



David Ladd
Waste Connections Inc.



Carl Mead
WM



Hall of Fame Inductees

The NWRA Hall of Fame recognizes extraordinary industry professionals whose career accomplishments are noteworthy and impactful. Honorees have distinguished themselves through significant contributions to the industry and their communities. They have been leaders actively engaged in the waste industry for at least 25 years. This year, NWRA inducts five outstanding leaders into our Hall of Fame.

Sponsored by:



Patty Garbarino,
Marin Sanitary Service



Patty Garbarino has spent more than three decades leading innovation and sustainability in the waste and recycling industry. Starting part-time at Marin Sanitary Service in 1987, she rose to become president of the company in 2000, following in the footsteps of her father, industry pioneer Joe Garbarino (Hall of Fame Class of 2014). A passionate environmental educator and advocate, she helped launch the company's Environmental Classroom and has led major initiatives in public education, government relations and zero waste. Under her leadership, Marin Sanitary pioneered a food waste-to-energy program, established Marin County's first Household Hazardous Waste facility, and co-founded Northern Recycling, a high-capacity composting and organics facility.

Garbarino also has played a critical role in shaping California state policy, advancing legislation to reduce plastic waste, increase recycling and promote local control. Her tireless commitment to innovation, community engagement and environmental stewardship has made a lasting impact on the industry and her community.

Michael Savage,
PTR/Komar Industries



Mike Savage celebrates 31 years in the waste and recycling industry, during which he has played a defining role in shaping its direction and growth. His leadership journey began in the mid-1990s through service on the ANSI Committees and as chairman of the Statistics Committee. He was elected to the Wastec Board of Governors in 2006, becoming vice chairman in 2008 and chairman in 2011—just as the industry was entering a historic period of transformation. Savage was instrumental in uniting the industry during the 2012 merger of the Environmental Industry Association, Wastec and NSWMA to form NWRA.

He worked tirelessly to build consensus among skeptical members, ultimately helping to craft the bylaws and structure for the new association. Savage later joined NWRA's Executive Board of Trustees and cast one of the decisive votes that brought the merger to life. His steady leadership and deep commitment were crucial in guiding the association through this period of change. He continued to serve as chairman of the Supplier Board of Governors until 2018.

Edward R. Vogel,
Vogel Disposal Service Inc.



Ed Vogel has dedicated his life to the solid waste industry, building on the legacy of his family's business and guiding it through decades of growth, innovation and resilience. Beginning his career in high school operating equipment, Vogel went on to lead operations, oversee acquisitions and open the company's first material recovery facility. He played a pivotal role in navigating regulations, securing landfill permits and transforming setbacks into long-term opportunities. As vice president of Vogel Holding, he has spearheaded major capital investments including advanced wastewater treatment systems, single-stream recycling upgrades and the company's fleet transition to renewable natural gas. His 30-year pursuit to reopen and properly line the Tri-County Landfill exemplifies his deep commitment to environmental stewardship. Vogel has established a model of independent success and a legacy that will endure well beyond his tenure.



Hall of Fame Inductees (cont.)

James M. Johnston,
Autocar Truck



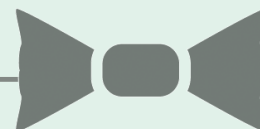
James M. Johnston has been a transformative force in the waste and recycling industry, leaving a legacy defined by innovation, safety and mentorship. He played a pivotal role in developing groundbreaking technologies going back to his start in the industry with McNeilus and currently with products like the E3 Diesel/Hydraulic Hybrid and Autocar's Advanced Driver Assistance Systems, significantly enhancing both efficiency and operator safety. His innovations—including one-touch dashboard diagnostics, rear corner glass windows and lightweight front-loader bodies—have redefined refuse truck functionality and maintenance. Through his visionary "Power of One" initiative, Johnston bridged the gap between chassis and body manufacturers, improving engineering collaboration and reducing production cycle times across the industry. A dedicated mentor and advocate for safety, he has influenced industry standards through his work with NWRA and ANSI, creating protocols that protect frontline workers. Johnston's legacy is not only in the trucks he's helped build but in the people and practices he's helped shape for the future of the industry.

Joseph Ursuy,
Comerica Bank



Joseph Ursuy has more than 26 years of dedicated service to the waste and recycling industry. He has helped fuel its growth by providing approximately \$12 billion in credit facilities to over 270 businesses—including more than 20 current NWRA Hall of Fame member companies. His deep relationships and financial expertise have enabled companies to expand fleets, build new facilities, adopt advanced technologies and drive innovation. Ursuy's enduring legacy extends beyond capital—he built a nationally recognized Environmental Services Department at Comerica, now supporting more than \$3 billion in credit and 100 clients with a dedicated team of 45 professionals. He also launched Comerica's Annual Client Appreciation Reception during WasteExpo, now in its 23rd year, bringing together more than 400 waste and environmental services industry leaders to foster meaningful, lasting connections. Ursuy's impact has shaped not only individual businesses but also the broader industry's future.

About the awards



Driver and Operator of the Year finalists were determined by a computerized scoring system. Independent judges selected the winners based on letters of recommendation and, for drivers, the difficulty of the route based upon factors such as pickups, weekly miles and manual versus automatic transmission. During judging, operators also were evaluated on the difficulty of the equipment operated. In addition to our winners who received the highest scores from our independent judges, the drivers and operators receiving honorable mentions were the next highest scoring applicants.

Hall of Fame inductees are selected based on scores in five categories, including recognition in the industry as a founder, pioneer, visionary or icon; enduring legacy and impact of contributions to the industry for a minimum of 25 years; steadfast values such as integrity, respect, courage, mentorship, volunteerism and inclusiveness; inspirational leadership at an NWRA service provider or supplier and on issues important to NWRA at the national, state and/or local level; and active association engagement and service as an ambassador of the waste industry.

About NWRA

The National Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA) represents the private sector of the waste and recycling services industry. Association members conduct business in all 50 states and include companies that manage solid, industrial/hazardous, medical and construction and demolition waste and equipment manufacturers, distributors and a variety of other professional service providers.