

TOWING & RECOVERY FOOTNOTES

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Pg 11

May 2009

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High-End Hauling

Certain customers want their classy cars cuddled

By Allan T. Duffin

Need your vehicle moved from one state to another? Perhaps it's more than just a car to you — it's your "baby" and it needs extra care while being transported. For some car owners, a vehicle is an expensive investment — a prized Corvette or European sports car, for example. Or maybe it's a secret prototype designed in an automaker's engineering laboratory, ready for unveiling at an upcoming auto show.

Whatever the special vehicle, it needs to be protected from the elements. Water spots, chips from flying asphalt, bird droppings — any one of these can lower the value of an automobile, expensive or not.

Fortunately, rollbacks equipped with quality tarpaulins, along with trucks and trailers built specifically to haul automobiles safely and damage-free, stand ready to help at a variety of companies across the United States.

On The Menu

Some of these companies exist solely to move vehicles across the country and all around the world. Some are



Schmit Towing flatbed carrying an Aston Martin

brokers, working the telephones to finagle transport for their customers through contract transporters. And then there are the towing firms that include auto hauling in their menu of services.

Jesse DeGraeve, owner of Anytime Towing in Traverse City, Michigan, is a former automotive engineer. Four years ago he was looking for a career change, so he took a hard look at the towing industry. "I noticed that there was a lack of customer service at existing towing companies in town," he said. "I figured that if I started a company that concentrated on customer service, it would not be very hard to break into the business." DeGraeve got a Freightliner flatbed and opened his business in a local industrial park, offering light- and medium-duty towing services.

Business grew steadily. Today DeGraeve's shop has six trucks: two Freightliner FL60 flatbeds, a Kenworth T300 flatbed, a Dodge 5500 wrecker, a Ford F-350 wrecker and a Freightliner tractor with a four-car wedge trailer for hauling cars. Anytime Towing offers

auto transport anywhere in the United States. "We've hauled a little bit of everything," said DeGraeve, "from tractors and construction equipment to Porsches, classic cars, and everything in between." *American Towman* magazine honored DeGraeve's shop with its Customer Service Excellence award three years in a row.

Although it's common practice to subcontract the hauling to other companies, DeGraeve keeps the entire operation under his own roof. "As far as subcontracting goes," he explained, "we stay away from that because I would rather not have another company doing work under our name. If there is damage to a vehicle, the customer is looking to us, not who we hired to do the job. It is just a lot simpler to do the work ourselves; then we can do a better job of quality control and customer service."

Sweet Rides

At Schmit Towing, owners Steve and Sue Schmit own five flatbeds and two triple-car trailers for long-distance

hauling. The Minneapolis, Minnesota-based company is family owned and operated and is currently celebrating its 25th anniversary. How did the Schmits get into the auto hauling business? "It came along with the territory," said Steve Schmit. "Over the years as we added dealerships as regular customers, they would also have us move their cars around the area."

Schmit noted that during the regular workday, his drivers pick up every type of vehicle at accident scenes and from clients who want their vehicles transported to dealers or repair shops. "We'll haul Hondas, SUVs, all the way to brand-new vehicles bought and sold on eBay, and collector and specialty cars," he said.

The most interesting vehicles he deals with are the eBay purchases, which include hot rods and muscle cars. It can be tough to haul an amazing car and not be able to test-drive it, said Schmit with a chuckle. "You'd just love to take them for a ride, but you can't do it."

Schmit's trailer and flatbeds see a lot of use in transporting and delivering vehicles all around the Midwest. "We have one client who does a lot of car shipping all over the world," said Schmit. "The client brings cars to us — usually eight or 10 cars off an auto transport carrier. Then we'll deliver those cars to the customers in the Midwest."

The opposite is also true: Schmit's company picks up cars around the Midwest and brings them back to the company's terminal. After that, a transport truck takes the cars and delivers them to the customers.

High-End Hauls

There are also companies that deal strictly with transport and have branched out to include auto hauling.

See HIGH-END HAULING, page 5

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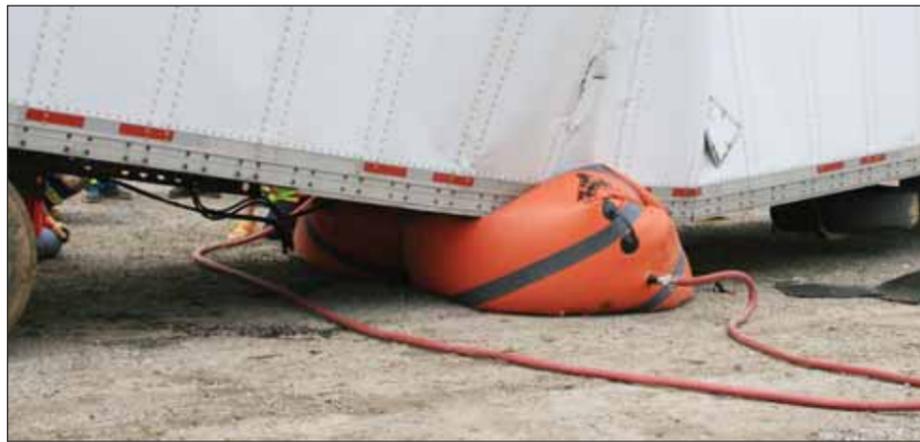
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Brain Stormin
with stormin' norman

Bag It Up, Buddy

Tips on using your air cushions safely & effectively



MatJacks at work

By Norman Horton

The views expressed in this column each month are the opinion of the author alone and do not necessarily represent the editorial position of this publication.

Despite the introduction of rotators, quick clearance, etc., there are still many jobs that call for the use of air cushions. When I started in the wrecker business, we had an old 600 and a 10-ton NoMar. Our next big purchase was a set of cushions so we could up-right tractor trailers.

Rather than having to laboriously unload a tractor trailer, anything we could do to set up a rig that was easier and yet fully professional was right up my alley. And since the air cushions I used were professional tools, it helped to justify a professional price.

I did find some customers who did not want cushions used in their recoveries, which I couldn't quite understand because in most cases we were able to perform a successful recovery

using them. So every chance we could, if the job warranted it, we tried to use air cushions.

Use Or Not?

Here are the criteria we looked for to use our cushions:

- Is it a high-dollar cargo that does not need to be unloaded? There are situations where it is probably best to leave product inside the container, such as with frozen food, TVs, or computers.
- Sometimes with hazardous loads it's safer to leave the product inside.
- In some situations you can't safely get a wrecker to hold everything properly.

What about jobs that are not air cushion jobs? An empty tractor trailer is probably not an air cushion job. A trailer that is so busted up that it would waste your time, tear up your bags, and waste your customer's money is not an air cushion job.

There are some hazmat jobs like tankers filled with propane and gaso-

line where it's safer and better to just pump the product off. Afterwards, you can determine whether or not to use the cushions based on the nature of the tank in question.

Have Enough

One of the things I kept running into time and time again (some of it may be due to the cost of air cushions) is that air cushions are often used with very little safety margin. I say if you are going to invest in cushions, get enough to do the job safely!

Many cushions are sold in sets of four or five large cushions and two smaller cushions. When you look at a 53/102 trailer and you've only got four large cushions, then you're 13 feet center to center between bags, which leaves too much of an unsupported area between cushions. It's not a good setup.

One of the things some towers seem to forget on cushion jobs is that they're not picking up a trailer, they're picking up the load and the tractor trailer is going along for the ride.

Look at it like picking up groceries in a wet paper bag. You don't pick up the wet paper bag from the top; you pick it up from the side and the bottom and let the bag hold the groceries. You're not picking up the bag, you're picking up the groceries using the bag. So when you pick up a loaded trailer, think of it as picking up the load that's in it.

Where's The Load?

It's very important to know where the load is. If it is on only one part of the trailer, you want to concentrate your bags around that load. Improperly placing bags in such a situation is an easy way to blow a bag through the side of trailer when there's nothing behind the wall to support it.

I've found that the answer is not more air pressure and less cushions, but rather more cushions and less air pressure. One of the best things I did was add medium cushions to my set of bags. Starter cushions rarely get the rig high enough to do a final placement with your big bags, but mediums

See BRAINSTORMIN, page 8

Towing & Recovery
Footnotes®

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860-767-3200 ext. 238; one year \$30;
two years \$55; three years \$75

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Product News
Please send all press releases and news of new or improved vehicles or equipment to: bcandler@traderonline.com

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Towing & Recovery Footnotes is published monthly for \$30.00 a year by Dominion Media, 10 Bokum Rd., Essex, CT 06426. Presort standard mail at Essex, CT, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Towing & Recovery Footnotes at 10 Bokum Rd., Essex, CT 06426.

SHORT HAULS

Industry people, news, shows, awards, and more



Jerr-Dan's magazine is now online

By Cyndi Kight

Email your company press releases, news items, and other information to the editor at bcandler@traderonline.com with any available photos and art.

Run Hard Now Online. Jerr-Dan Corporation's magazine, *Run Hard*, is available now in an on-line format. The newest edition is available now at www.jerr-dan.com. *Run Hard* magazine provides towing professionals with information on business management and the selection and use of appropriate wreckers and carriers. Each quarterly issue includes features on towing and recovery equipment, news and events, towing company profiles, safety issues and more. To sign up for a free online subscription and view back issues, see www.jerr-dan.com/life/run-hard.asp

Move Over In MA. Massachusetts's new "Move Over" law went into effect on Mar. 22. It was designed to protect police, firefighters, paramedics, tow truck drivers, and all roadside emergency and maintenance workers. All drivers approaching a stationary emergency or maintenance vehicle with flashing lights are required to move to the next adjacent lane if it is safe to do so. If that is not possible, drivers must slow down. Violations could result in a fine of up to \$100.

2008 WTRAA Tow Woman of the Year. Congrats to Mary Weber, the Women of the Towing and Recovery Association of America's 2008 Tow Woman of the Year! Weber, who is the organization's second vice-president, was honored during the *American*

"The product line offers products costing up to 20 percent less"

Towman Exposition in Baltimore on Nov. 20. The award is given annually to a WTRAA member who makes a difference in her community, in her family, her business, and for the betterment of the towing industry through her state and national associations.



Mary Weber, Ken Weber Truck Service, Pewaukee, WI: WTRAA's 2008 Tow Woman of the Year

Navistar's New Value Line. In response to the tough economic times, Navistar (NYSE: NAV) is launching a new value-line private-label brand of truck parts aimed at cost-conscious truck owners. Known as PartSmart, the new product line offers products that cost up to 20 percent less than genuine, original equipment parts. The PartSmart line focuses on fast-moving and fast-wearing parts for all makes of trucks.

All PartSmart parts come with a one-year, parts-only replacement warranty and can be purchased at any one of over 500 International dealers in the U.S. PartSmart will be available globally later in the year. Additional information is available at www.navistar.com/newsroom.

TX Non-Consent Tow Fee Study Results Available. The non-consent tow fee study, ordered by the Texas

Our Lost Towers

Jerry Mattivi, 72, of Oklahoma City and Overland Park, KS, passed away March 18, 2009. He was a veteran of more than 40 years as a small-business owner in the Kansas City area and was in our Hall of Fame's Class of 2987.

Jerry had been a Holmes rep and worked for Chevron before Miller bought that company. He was a Miller distributor in Kansas City and later in Oklahoma.

Robert Carson "Bob" Wood. Wood, 81, of Vinton, VA passed away March 18. A veteran of the Air Force in WWII, he was the founder, owner, and operator of Wood Pure Oil, Bob Wood Union 76, Wood's Service Center, and Wood's Auto Parts. He was a member of Thrasher Memorial United Methodist Church for 62 years.

Bobbie "Cozy Bob" Swaney. The former president of the Towing & Recovery Professionals of Colorado passed away March 26. A tow truck procession was held to honor him.



George "Bud" Anderson

George L. "Bud" Anderson. The owner of Golden State Wrecker and Equipment Sales died on March 13. He was a member of CTTA, the Hall of Fame class of 1991, and the co-founder and first president of the Towing Equipment Distributors Association.

Ann Malcolm. "Mrs. M" of Malcolm Services, NM was the first President of the Women of the Towing & Recovery Association of America (WTRAA), serving from 1981-1983. She passed away on February 20, 2009

Regarded as a true pioneer for women in the towing industry, she was

instrumental in obtaining funding for a purchase of a computer for TRAA in 1984, helped start the WTRAA Scholarship Program, was awarded WTRAA's Tow Woman of the Year for 1981, and was inducted into the International Towing and Recovery Hall of Fame & Museum Class of 1990.

Memorials in her name to the WTRAA Scholarship Fund would be appropriate and appreciated as the scholarship program is one of the greatest accomplishments of WTRAA.

Mrs. M's legacy will live on in the scholarships for the children of towers who continue their education.

Robert Vaughn Bailey. The 33-year-old Macon, Georgia tow truck operator died Mar. 16 after a crash.

Keith Calpito. The 35-year-old El Paso, Texas resident was a driver for Best Wrecker. He died Mar. 8 after his motorcycle was struck by a suspected drunk driver.

James R. Charles. The 42-year-old owner of Charles Garage and Towing of Greens Fork, Indiana died Mar. 6.

Betsy Merrill. The 60-year-old Spokane, Washington resident was the owner of Rouse's Towing.

2009 Wall Of The Fallen Names. On Sept. 9, 2006, the "Wall of the Fallen" statue and memorial wall were unveiled at the International Towing and Recovery Hall of Fame and Museum in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

In 2007, the names of 94 men and women who lost their lives in the line of service in the towing and recovery industry were placed on the wall. Another 61 bronze name plaques were added in 2008.

This year, the ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 19.

In order to gather a comprehensive list of towers who have died doing the job they loved, Ken Cruse, chairman of the Wall of the Fallen committee, has requested the help of the towing community. Names of fallen towers should be submitted to the ITRHFM (International Towing and Recovery Hall of Fame Museum), 3315 Broad Street, Chattanooga, TN 37408.

In order to ensure timely delivery of the bronze nameplates for the wall, please send in all names before July 1. Forms may be downloaded from the website www.wallofthefallen.com. There is no charge for this tribute.

For more information, please call 423-267-3132.

HIGH-END HAULING

continued from page 5

Policy Issues

Technological advancements are making the job safer behind the wheel and on the road. "The equipment out there seems to be getting better and better," said DeGraeve. "We have stainless-steel wrecker beds, wireless tow lights, LED lighting, computers — all these little things add up at the end of the day."

that's one million dollars if you crash into a building. Your 'on the hook' coverage is the hard part," he explained.

For transporting expensive vehicles, the typical towers' insurance probably won't do, said Littman. "The average guy hauling vehicles might have a \$75,000 insurance policy, which isn't enough. This is what separates the men from the boys."

Littman explained that a policy that would cover an expensive vehicle — something in the neighborhood of \$500,000 worth of coverage — can cost an additional \$1,500 to \$1,800 per



Auto trailer (with graphic mockup)

In Calabasas, California, Jeff Littman of Century Towing cautions his fellow towers about insurance requirements for hauling expensive vehicles, pointing out a common misconception in the industry: "If your policy said you have one million dollars in coverage,

month. That's a high price to pay for towers who want to haul expensive vehicles from point to point — but it can be well worth the expense in a business that revolves around getting from Point A to Point B as safely as possible. ☛

Tarp Haulin'



Jerr-Dan's sliding tarp system

Towers using rollback trucks for hauling automobiles have been rewarded with a relatively new towing industry product: the sliding tarp system, notably with new models available from Jerr-Dan and Miller Industries. One operator can roll the tarp right over the vehicle he's carrying, protecting it from the elements — and from prying eyes, whether it's an expensive sports car or a hush-hush prototype.

"The guy hauling a Lamborghini or Ferrari probably doesn't want people to know he has that kind of car going down the road," said Alan Briley, Director of Sales for Indianapolis-based Aero Industries, which has built tarps for flatbeds and trailers for nearly 65 years. "So the only way to take care of it is to climb up there and cover it."

The sliding tarp system provides an alternate, and safer, method for the tower. "The biggest benefit from a sliding tarp system is that it keeps the driver on the ground," said Briley. "He's not climbing up on the body of the truck to cover the vehicle."

For anyone who's dealt with worker's compensation issues resulting from driver injuries, the rolling tarp provides some relief: "Keeping the driver's feet on the ground is worth a lot more than the price of the system," noted Briley. An additional benefit: add graphics and text and the tarp can function as a "rolling billboard," a useful marketing tool for advertising a company's services.

Last year Jerr-Dan teamed up with Aero Industries, which has manufactured the popular Conestoga sliding tarp system since the early 1980s. "Jerr-Dan came to us after doing extensive market research," explained Briley. "They determined that there was a market for sliding tarp systems, specifically in the carrier industry." The target markets included luxury high-end vehicles, auctions, and industrial car-

riers of equipment like backhoes, bulldozers, and the like.

Meanwhile, Miller Industries got together with Quick Draw Tarpaulin Systems of Dearborn, Michigan to offer their own jointly produced system. "We met with Miller at a towing show," recalled Jim Payne of Quick Draw Tarps. "The conversation started there. We decided we should look into doing something together, and to see if it was a win-win for both companies." The result was a Quick Draw Tarp that can be installed on rollback trucks.

Another use for the rolling tarp system is to cover vehicles that are being held as evidence for forensic study. "For a crime scene investigation," said Payne, "if it's a fatality and they can't put anything over the vehicle, it can be put right up on a truck. Then the tarp can be rolled right over the vehicle so that nothing touches it."

Jeff Littman, owner of Century Towing in Calabasas, Calif., uses his own enclosed trailer to transport his customers' high-end vehicles. While he's examined the new tarps on the market, for now it's not cost-effective for him to make the jump.

"My enclosed trailer cost about \$12,000 and it's pretty versatile," he said.

He also noted that certain tarps must be installed at the factory, which could be on the opposite side of the country. "So if you have a truck in southern California and you want to have a tarp installed, you're going to have to drive it 6,000 miles," he said, plus pay for the tarp and its installation.

Still, even a cross-country trip to have the right tarp installed can be worth the effort. A high-quality protective cover that doubles as a rolling billboard can be a useful addition to an existing equipment fleet — and an opportunity to expand the various services that a towing company offers to its customers.



Miller Industries' sliding tarp system

Holmes parts Jerr-Dan parts Century parts

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Moving Stars' Cars

Hauling exotic autos for the rich & famous

By Jami Frankenberry

There are the cars: Aston Martin, Bentley, Lamborghini, Maserati, Porsche, Rolls Royce. And there are the clients: A-list actors, star athletes, famous musicians, wealthy tycoons and lawyers.

All are regulars in a day's work for brothers Jeff and Joel Littman of Century Specialized Towing and Transport in Calabasas, California. The Littmans' towing company – they are the only full-time employees – is based about 30 miles from downtown Los Angeles, and the brothers' work takes them from mansions to movie sets in Malibu, Beverly Hills and Hollywood, and places in between.

Included in the workload is the transport of clients' vehicles for maintenance and repairs and doing roadside assistance for luxury automobile companies such as Bentley and Mercedes. The brothers sometimes tote exotic cars to movie or TV sets.

"It's definitely not boring," Jeff Littman said. "But you have to not be star struck. You just knock on the door and say, 'May I have your keys please?'"

Starting Out

Jeff Littman's trucks now carry some of the world's most exotic cars. It's a perfect fit for a guy who has always been a car enthusiast. "My neighbor was a service manager at car dealership," said Jeff, 43, a native of Canoga Park, CA. "He was always in his garage fiddling with cars and I was always over there helping out."

While in high school, Littman took auto shop, and an uncle gave him an "ugly blue" 1975 Chevy Nova when he was 15 years old. He started tinkering. "It was all taken apart and if I wanted to get my license and drive I had to figure it out," he said. "It took me about three months to get it all figured out and running."

While working at a car dealership in his teens, Littman met a tower and



Century's flatbed with a special cargo

"that's how it all started," he said. Soon he was working part-time at a towing company. He learned how to tow and dispatch; he learned a little of everything and stayed with it.

Joined By Joel

What Jeff Littman liked most was "helping people and just being outside and not being stuck in the same place inside every day," adding, "and it kind of worked out."

Meanwhile, Joel Littman joined his brother in towing over eight years ago. Now 35, Joel worked a variety of jobs before a truck became available where his older brother was working. "He asked me if I wanted to work," Joel said, "and from that day forward, it's been non-stop since."

The Littman brothers, whose father and uncle once owned a gas station, went into business on their own in 2001, forming Century Specialized Towing and Transport.

Heading High-End

In his early years in towing, Jeff Littman dealt with just about every facet of the business. His previous company was a high-volume tower that did work for auto clubs, commercial accounts,

sheriff's offices, transporting.

"Anything you can imagine," he said.

Jeff also worked with some high-end clients. "I saw that it was something that was a lot less stressful," he said. "You could spend time with the customer and provide a little more service. You could provide better service and focus on the customer and get away from the super high-volume, and that's what I wanted to get away from."

From that idea Century Specialized Towing and Transport was formed. Now, said Jeff, "instead of running a hundred \$25 calls, I'll run ten \$250 calls."

Reliable Rep

In the years since Century started, the Littmans have gained a reputation as a reliable team around Hollywood.

Jeff, who is married with two children and has served as president of the California Tow Truck Association's Los Angeles chapter, often works the early morning hours, and Joel, who is single, comes on later. Their fleet of trucks includes an enclosed carrier trailer and two flatbed haulers.

One day, Jeff or Joel might be picking up a Ferrari to take it to a body shop to repair a couple of scratches or moving a Packard from a detail shop back to a

customer's warehouse. The next day, they're carrying a car to the set of the HBO show "Entourage," or doing some roadside assistance work.

Much of their business comes from "high-profile, very wealthy customers," Jeff said. "That's 99 percent of our business: exotic cars. We don't change tires or deliver gas." For some customers, Joel added, "we'll just make sure the cars are serviced and washed and cleaned and ready for them when they get home."



Jeff Littman

When an exotic automobile is involved, things are different for a tower. A high-priced car means "a lot more care, a lot more time," Jeff said. "I carry \$600,000 worth of on-hook coverage. Most guys have \$75,000."

"We use soft straps on everything," added Joel, who has appeared in several TV series. "We use rags and 90 percent of the time we never touch their suspension. We go to their wheels when we strap down."

Small Biz, Big Names

The business has stayed small over the years, and Century's only other employee is a part-time bookkeeper. "I kept it with my brother and I because my clientele is comfortable with that," Jeff said.

Jeff and Joel prefer not to name their

See MOVING STARS' CARS, page 9

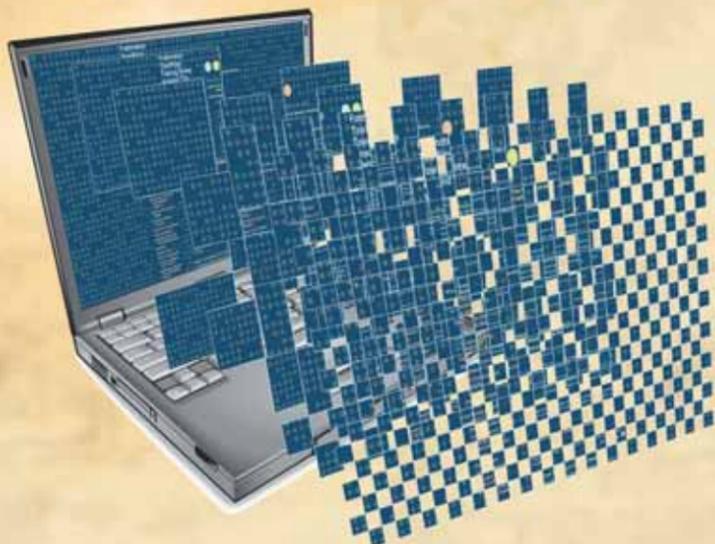
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BRAINSTORMIN

continued from page 3

will help get a section of trailer high enough to do it.

Another thing you can do with medium bags: As your trailer comes up, it will sort of roll up. But if part of the trailer is lying on the ground, you can use the mediums to lift the load until it shifts to the floor without picking the whole trailer up, without letting the load slide to one side.

The other thing to remember when you're picking up a loaded tractor trailer is that what holds the floor up is the roof. As strange as that may sound, it's the truth — you lose the roof, you also lose the wall, you lose the floor. It's an integrated box and that box needs the roof to hold the walls straight, which holds the floor on. So keep in mind that if you have a top that's caved in or with the top rails buckled, it will be that much harder to do that recovery job.

Less Is More

And once again, remember when you're trying to air-bag up a messed-up trailer, more cushions and less air pressure will go a long way. The lower you keep your air pressure, the more it is spread out and the less chance there is of blowing the trailer apart. There's nothing more embarrassing than picking up a trailer and having it buckle and the load spill out.

Experience will tell you how far you can go with cushion jobs or if you even

“Air cushions are often used with very little safety margin”

need to use them. This is why advance communication with the customer is important. A tractor trailer can come apart when you air-bag one up, so you're much better off giving the customer the odds and possibilities of success and failure, just like a doctor would do. Tell them that there's X percent chance this thing could come apart, so please let us know if you want to continue with the job. If it stays together, you're a genius; if it comes apart, you gave them the odds and they called the shots.

So if you don't have air bags, certainly consider buying some; just be sure to invest in enough of them to do these jobs safely. ☞

**SHORT HAULS**

continued from page 4

Department of Licensing and Regulation or TDLR, looked at the fees charged by license and permit holders for non-consent tows, compliance of license and permit holders with local regulations governing towing fees, and consumer complaints related to fees for non-consent tows. It was conducted by an independent, third-party research group. Results are now available on the TDLR's website at www.license.state.tx.us

Progressive Offers Expanded Coverage. Progressive has announced “Expanded On-Hook Towing Liability,” which now covers more than just the towed vehicle. Towed property, including cargo-like equipment or raw materials and select personal items in towed vehicles, is now covered if it is damaged at any time between pickup and delivery. Plus coverage for trans-

PROGRESSIVE
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mission and transaxle damage is now included. Limits for this truck insurance coverage are now available up to \$100,000.

“Expanded Garagekeepers Liability” now provides coverage for vehicles being serviced, repaired, or stored at up to three business locations. This coverage is also now available in limits up to \$100,000. The new on-hook and garagekeepers coverages are currently

See **SHORT HAULS**, page 10

Racing With Miller

Continuing Racing Relationship. Miller Industries will continue for the next three years to provide the official towing and recovery equipment at race tracks owned by International Speedway Corporation.

Under the agreement, Miller Industries will provide trucks and equipment to California Speedway, Darlington Raceway, Daytona International Speedway, Homestead-Miami Speedway, Kansas Speedway, Michigan International Speedway, Richmond International Raceway, Talladega SuperSpeedway, Chicagoland Speedway, and Phoenix International Raceway.

The trucks are staffed by experienced tow operators from across the country who volunteer their time and services. They are required to attend sanctioned training classes that are conducted by Miller Industries Race Director Ken Burdine on the proper techniques and safety procedures on the speedways. The equipment and operators will cover a wide variety of major races at these tracks that includes NASCAR, Indy

Racing League, ARCA, USAC, and Grand American sanctioned events. For additional information, visit www.milerind.com and click on “At the Races” under galleries.

Also At The Races. Miller Industries has joined forces with AAA to help promote their Slow Down/Move Over campaign to race fans throughout the year, starting with the Daytona 500. The new Miller Industries ad that is printed in the souvenir race programs at many NASCAR races throughout the year will include the AAA Slow Down/Move Over logo along with a public service message calling attention to the laws and stressing to race fans to slow down and move over when they see flashing lights from emergency vehicles on the roadways.

Our Tow Heroes

Pros who help others

B&W Wrecker. An unnamed tow truck driver for B&W Wrecker of Corsicana, Texas came to the rescue of a 78-year old Navarro County man in early March.

The elderly man and his wife had been stranded when their pickup truck became stuck in the mud.

The couple was unable to summon help for several hours and the man set off on foot to seek assistance.

According to the Corsicana *Daily Sun* story, “After trying for several hours, [the wife] was finally able to reach an OnStar operator by cell phone at about two a.m. Thursday, and sheriff's deputies were dispatched in an effort to find the truck and [the elderly man].”

B&W Wrecker was called to retrieve the pickup and the driver used the company's four-wheel-drive truck to try to locate the elderly man.

The B&W Wrecker driver found the man, who has a tracheotomy tube and a feeding tube, lying in a ditch about two miles from his pickup truck. The man was transported to intensive care at a regional hospital.

Mike Bailey and Richie Barnes. These two Canadian tow truck drivers were cited as heroes for locating and holding two suspects for police.

The drivers had been using scanners to monitor a police chase involving a man and woman and decided to act.



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Correction

In the feature article, “Even Experts Make Mistakes: Part 1” in the February 2009 issue, we misspelled the name of Ronnie Barrickman of Barrickman's Towing and Recovery in Pendleton, Kentucky. We regret the error. In the article, Barrickman described how he was hurt on the job. He later told us he believes he has about seven screws in his injured leg! That's another warning to be extra careful out there.

MOVING STARS' CARS

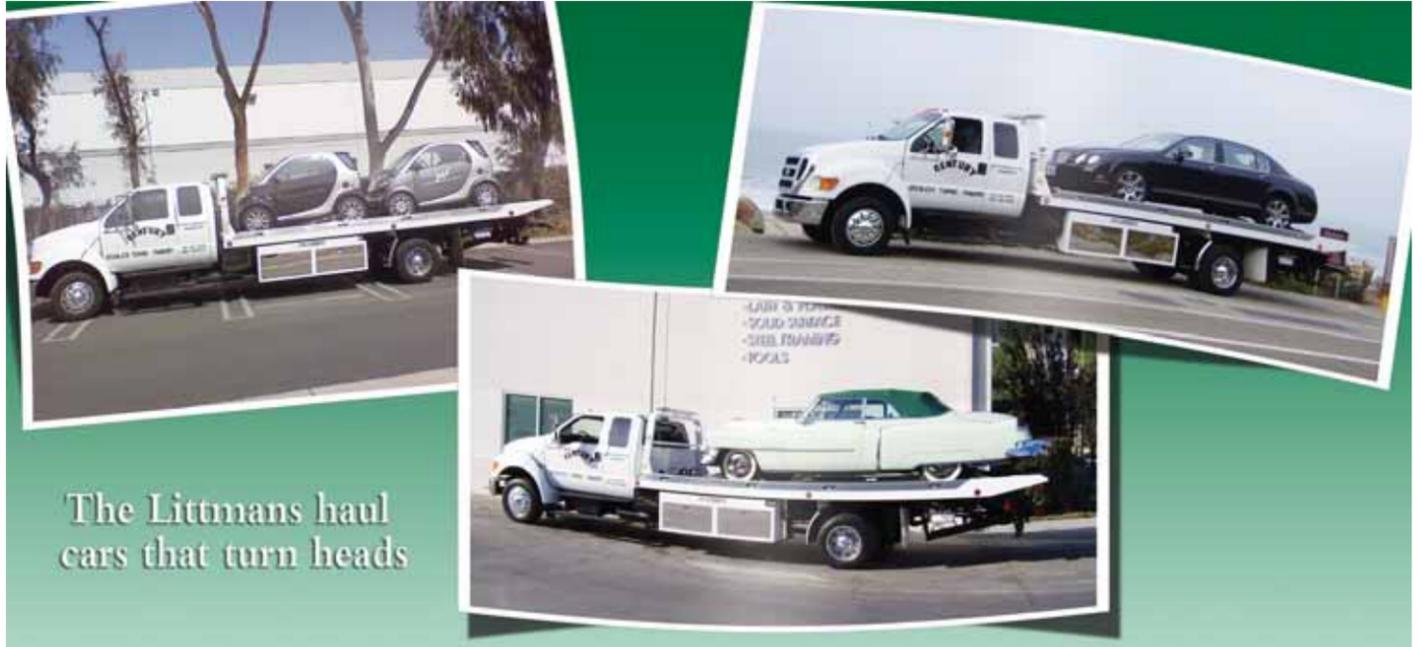
continued from page 7

clients, but they say their customers include some of the biggest names in sports, movies, and television. And their cargo features some of the world's most exotic automobiles. They have customers with dozens of Ferraris and Porsches, and they've towed cars worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

A recent week included hauling a Bentley GT (price tag: \$200,000-plus) and a Rolls Royce Phantom (more than \$300,000). "Some are very over-the-top exotic cars," Jeff said. "I don't even know what kind of price tag they'd put on them."

It would be easy to get star-struck, but not Jeff and Joel. They make it a point not to treat their high-profile clients any differently. "What you have to understand is they get up every morning, and they're just like us," Jeff said. "They just were lucky enough to be famous."

"I just treat them like any normal person," Joel said. "If you treat them different, they're going to treat you different and they're going to act different. They're the coolest people as long as you're with them on a personal level."



The Littmans haul cars that turn heads

Cool Cars & Clients

Jeff and Joel don't name names, but they do have some intriguing stories.

There was the popular comedian who came out in his robe and slippers with a hearty greeting. One call came from a client who had been hounded by the paparazzi at a Hollywood night club and asked Century to retrieve the car from the nightspot.

"I've had customers going on vacation and they get 300 miles away and realize they don't want to drive anymore," Jeff said. Sometimes a job comes with a bonus such as a concert ticket, clothing, or "just crazy stuff from customers," he added.

While Jeff says he always stays cool, there was one occasion when he admitted to being awestruck after arriving at a client's home for a job. The customer was a rock musician that Jeff had idolized for years, and he couldn't help himself.

"None of them bother me but that one got me," Jeff said. "I'm in his garage and there's all these gold records on his wall. I was like, 'Look at this, oh my god!'"

Said Joel: "He couldn't even speak when he was there."



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2005 379 Peterbilt, 475 HP CAT, 13 spd. trans, 70" Sleeper, 36" WB, Jake Brake, Century 7035, 35 ton boom, 2-35,000lb winches, hyd spades. Stk# 839185

2009 335 Pete, 325 HP, px6 diesel, 6 spd. trans, air brakes, air ride, Century 3212, 16 ton boom, 2-15,000lb underlift, hyd spades, 6500lb L-arms. Stk# 791100



2005 M2 Freightliner, 210 HP, Mercedes, 6 spd. trans, Vulcan V30, 16ton, alum body. Stk# M2

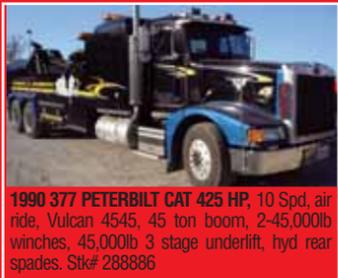


1998 FL70 Freightliner, 5.9 Cummins, 6 Speed, Jerr-Dann 26' Industrial, 20,000lb Deck and 8,000lb Winch. Stk# 922347



2005 Kenworth T800, 465 HP Cummins, 18 Speed, New Century 9055 50 Ton, Boom, 3 Stage Boom, Air Winch Free Spools, Low Rider Underlift, Air Ride, A/C. Stk# 072650

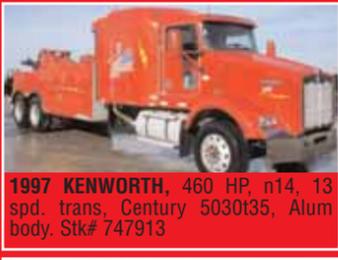
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1990 377 PETERBILT CAT 425 HP, 10 Spd, air ride, Vulcan 4545, 45 ton boom, 2-45,000lb winches, 45,000lb 3 stage underlift, hyd rear spades. Stk# 288886



94 FREIGHTLINER, 425 CAT, 13 Spd. trans. Century 5030135. Stk# 740071



1997 KENWORTH, 460 HP, n14, 13 spd. trans, Century 5030135, Alum body. Stk# 747913



1990 T600 PETERBILT, CAT 425 HP, 16spd, air ride, Century 9055, 45 ton boom, 2-45,000lb winches, 45,000lb 3 stage underlift, 4 pr axle forks. Stk#541639



1987 Freightliner, CAT 9 Spd, spring susp, Vulcan 20/20, 20 ton boom, 2-20,000lb planetary winches, 3 pr axle forks. Stk# 289879



2005 3778 PETERBILT, 370 HP ISM, Cummins, 8LL, Century 5130 Alum Body. 25 Ton Boom, 2-5,000lb Planetary Winches, 115' 3 Stage Underlift, 24.5 Alum. Wheels, 65,000 Miles. STK# 866123

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THE REPO MAN

The Chase Is On

With spring, there'll be plenty of debtors to trace

By David Gandal

The declining economy has taken our skip tracing industry into places we have never been before. Instead of skipping, people are literally throwing the keys at recovery agents and begging them to "Just take the car!" Many lending institutions have begun calling past-due debtors asking for voluntary surrenders and are getting them. Conversely, banks may choose to just let a car go rather than spend additional money for a skip locate.

So what's a skip tracer to do? I say hunker down and prepare for a very busy spring. Get your accounts in order and ensure that contact has been made on all of them as soon as possible. So many homes have been resold, there is a good chance you are sitting in front of a vacant one, so eliminate these bad addresses as soon as possible, then save gas and demand vehicles — that's what you do.

"The numbers will just get too big to ignore"

There are still plenty of skip accounts to work. Many are the same people you would be looking for even in good times. And others are debtors who, because of the bad times, would not normally be repossessed.

Many data bases have become much stronger with good information over the past year also. In many cases, Lexus is picking up addresses the day

See THE REPO MAN, page 11

SHORT HAULS

continued from page 10

available in 19 states and are expected to roll out countrywide throughout 2009. For more information, or to find a local independent agent, visit www.progressivecommercial.com

Arrow Extends Warranty. Arrow Truck Sales, Inc. has extended its standard, 30-day, pre-owned truck warranty to 90 days. This comprehensive warranty covers the engine, transmission, and rear end, plus the radiator, ECM, and turbocharger. This new coverage is available on selected Volvo trucks. For more information, visit www.arrowtruck.com

SWTO Offers New Benefit. Current and new members of Southwest Tow Operators now have a new benefit: an Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D) insurance policy at no



additional cost. The policy will initially start out at \$15,000 coverage and will protect tow operators 24/7, on the job or not. Southwest Tow Operators will cover all charges and administrative duties for this coverage.

Southwest Tow Operators will continue to offer its "In the Line of Duty" Benevolent Fund for the family of any licensed, professional tower lost while on the job in the state of Texas up to \$1,000 to assist the family members.

For more information, contact Southwest Tow Operators at 866-320-9600.

TRAA News

2009 Slate of Officers Announced. The TRAA's Nominating Committee has announced the following candidates for office: President: Al Gregg; First Vice-President: Joe Pedigo; Second Vice-President: Jeff Roskopf; Third Vice-President: Angela Roper; Treasurer: Mike Holland. Joann Blyton submitted a petition to run for Fourth Vice-President. Elections will be held during the Annual Meeting on May 28 in Reno, Nevada.

Show Your Support. Contribute to the Women of the Towing & Recovery Association of America's Scholarship Fund by purchasing a safety green magnetic ribbon from AWDirect.

The ribbon has the message "I Support the Towing Community" and \$1 from the sale of each ribbon goes to the Scholarship Fund. Visit the AWDirect site at www.awddirect.com

TRAA Will Fly You Anywhere In The U.S. TRAA is sponsoring a contest for towers to sign up as many regular members as they can before July 1st, 2009. The person recruiting the highest number of new members will receive two free airline roundtrip tickets anywhere in the U.S.

The winner will also be featured in the National Towing News as the winner of the 2009 "Find and Fly Membership Drive." Ask those you refer to list your name on the application so that you will receive credit for the referral. Membership applications can be found on the TRAA web site www.towserver.net. To have an application faxed, contact Juanita Martin at 800-728-0136 or at towserver@aol.com



TRAA's Sam Brewer

Legal Action Account Opened. In his President's Message in the Jan/Feb edition of the Towing and Recovery Association of America newsletter, President Sam Brewer announced the opening of a Legal Action bank account. The fund is to be used for the support of issues that arise and threaten the best interests of the towing and recovery industry. It was opened with \$10,000 and member contributions will be added.

Brewer wrote: "With this growing fund we will have the revenue needed to move forward with issues...and we can do so without having to consider special assessments or other means to raise the necessary money."

The Legal Action fund is separate from the existing Political Action Fund, which is used to support political entities that support the towing industry.

TRAA's Certification Guide On DVD. The National Driver Certification Study Guide for tow drivers is now available in a PowerPoint presentation (DVD) format for \$29.99.

Purchase the software disc to train yourself or the entire workforce at your facility. You will also get a printed NDCP study guide with your order.

The training course presentation includes Customer Service, Safety, Appearance, Attitude, Truck, Equipment, and Traffic Incident Management. Also enroll in TRAA's National Driver Certification Program (NDCP). Information and an application can be downloaded from TRAA's website www.towserver.net, or email Natasha Patterson at natasha@towserver.net

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272880 New 2007 Sterling Acterra, Mercedes 210 HP, Automatic, 350, SL145



279048 New 2008 Sterling Bullet, Cummins ISB 6.7L, Automatic, HPL60



295842 New 2008 Ford F650, 6.7 300 HP, Automatic, 21' Alum. Dual Angle

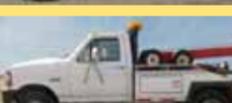


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278939 New 2008 Sterling Bullet, Cummins ISB 6.7L, Automatic, MPL40



300538 New 2007 GMC 5500, GMC 300 HP, Automatic, HPL60



304665 Used 1995 Chevrolet 6500, Cat 200 HP, Auto., 147220 Miles, 19' Champion Steel Carrier. \$19,500



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TRUCK TALK

The King Of Bling

*He's had a lifelong love affair
with tow trucks*



Daryl Jamieson's unique Oshkosh

By Jami Frankenberry

Maybe it's the thousands of dollars worth of chrome on his trucks. Could be the tinted windows or the nearly 150 lights on them. Or the entries in the book "World's Greatest Tow Trucks" or the appearance on the Discovery Channel. Then there are the dozen or so trophies scattered about his home and business.

Whatever the reason, Daryl Jamieson, owner of J&M Towing Service in Romulus, Michigan, has been dubbed "The King of Bling."

"They stuck that on me probably 10 years ago," Jamieson, 48, said with a hearty laugh. "I love that bling, man; I gotta have it. Everybody's got their own hobby."

Jamieson's hobby – decking out his tow trucks with glitzy lights and accessories – is evident on his fleet of about 20 trucks used in his three locations near Detroit, including Romulus, Dearborn, and Dearborn Heights.

"All my trucks, I probably spend \$4,000 to \$5,000 putting stainless steel and extra lights and making all the lights blink," Jamieson said. "That's on every truck I buy. Let's just say J&M Towing has a lot of 'Wow' factor."

Special Ones

While all of Jamieson's trucks stand out, a few raise more eyebrows than others. A few of his favorites:

- A 2007 Kenworth T800 with \$20,000 worth of stainless-steel chrome, a bevy of extra lights, and two television sets – one in the dash and a flat screen in the bunk.
- A 2001 high-hood Kenworth, nicknamed "The WreckMaster," with 144 lights, hardwood floors, a TV, and DVD player. "It's also a crane," Jamieson said. "It's got 44 feet of stick or boom, another 40 feet of crane jibs."

*"I love that
bling man,
I gotta have it"*

- A 10-wheel-drive, heavy-duty Oshkosh, "a 50-ton truck with 100,000-pound winches, 680 feet of rope, and it tandem-steers up front," Jamieson said. "There's only three in the country like it."

"They're all special," Jamieson said when asked if he has a favorite. "They're so unique." But the 50-ton Oshkosh, with two transmissions and a total of 52 gears, usually draws some extra oohs and aahs.

"When you go out somewhere in that, people are just standing there watching that thing work," Jamieson said. "It's pretty awesome...every time it's gotta go out we say, 'Oh, my gosh, somebody needs the Oshkosh.'"

Dream Come True

Jamieson is living out a boyhood dream. A Michigan native, he grew up watching his father George Jamieson run a towing service. "That's when it got in my blood," Jamieson said. "I knew I wanted to own my own towing company, even as a young boy. Seeing all the wrecks and crashes and seeing semis rolled over was fascinating as a kid. My dad was close friends with some in the law enforcement and that was fascinating."

See TRUCK TALK, page 15

THE REPO MAN

continued from page 10

the debtor is getting new utility or phone hookups; this is also a great place to find cell phone numbers for the debtor.

Masterfiles is offering much updated telephone information that is 99 percent accurate. Bellescamp Communication (formerly known as Skip Tracy) offers investigators multiple ways to communicate with skips. I would even go as far as to say that skip-tracing vehicles has gotten easier over the past year, thanks in a big part to the aforementioned data bases and their advancements.

All of that being said, there is still a growing market for "full locate" services to lien holders. For one thing, the

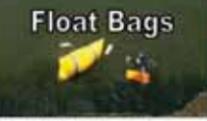
forwarding offices are still not getting enough vehicles located. As time goes by, the lien holders will have to put a good deal of these lost vehicles out for recovery with skip companies. The numbers will just get too big to ignore.

For another, the hard skip is still out there and the banks still want these cars back. There is a real distinction between those who are debtors just because of the hard times and those debtors who are simply out to defraud the lien holder, but in either case, the lien holder has various options for getting these units picked up. And I assure you they will pay well.

So light a fire and get your employees in a circle around you. If not just to keep you warm until spring, then at least to tell them that together you can beat this — as a team. That is what it will take, not just for your company but probably the country as well. ☛



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<p>Float Bags</p>  <p>UNDERWATER FLOAT BAGS For water recovery</p>		<p>TURBO LIFT</p> 		<p>Visit our website www.matjack.com</p>  <p>MATJACK AIR BAG</p>	
<p>Landing Bags</p>  <p>LANDING BAGS Provide for a controlled cushioned landing for a rolled over trailer..</p>		<p>JUMBO SAFELIFT AIR CUSHIONS. THE BEST PROFESSIONAL TOWERS USE ONLY THE BEST PROFESSIONAL EQUIPMENT, BECAUSE THEIR REPUTATION RIDES ON IT! JUMBO CUSHIONS ARE THE BEST CUSHION IN THE RECOVERY BUSINESS.</p>		<p>Matjack Air Bags lift up to 70 tons with only one inch clearance, which allows you to place recovery straps or cushions. Also, they are great for load shifts and taking the stress off kingpins during rollovers!</p>	

The Naked Truth

A woman had a flat tire on the interstate, so she eased her car over to the shoulder of the road, got out and opened the trunk. She took out two life-size cardboard figures of naked men, unfolded them, and stood them at the rear of her car facing oncoming traffic. They were in trench coats, but exposing their naked bodies to approaching drivers.

Drivers started slowing down to stare at the lifelike naked figures and traffic started backing up. Everyone was tooting their

horns and waving like crazy.

It wasn't long before an irritated-looking state trooper pulled up behind her. He got out of his car and started walking toward the lady. He was not a happy camper.

"Just what's going on here?" he asked.

"I have a flat tire," she said.

"So what's the deal with these obscene cardboard men?"

"Simple," she replied. "They are my emergency flashers."

THE GEAR MART

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New Panel Deck

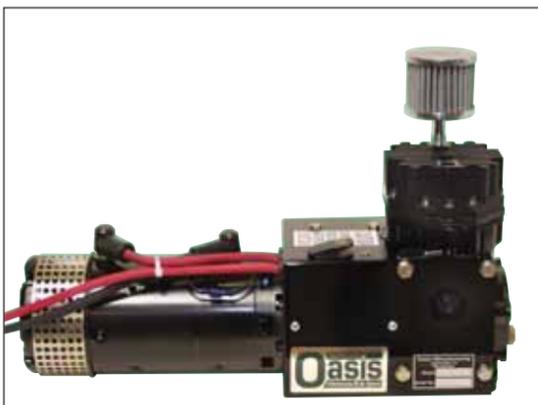
Jerr-Dan Corporation has introduced a new five-ton Diamond Plate panel deck. The new panel deck is engineered to deliver a cost-effective combination of strength and durability in a lighter-weight carrier.

Available in 19-, 20- and 21-foot lengths and 96- or 102-inch widths, the five-ton Diamond Plate panel deck features corrosion-resistant decking and cross-member combination panels on eight-inch centers for maximum strength. In addition, the special design and low deck height offers improved load distribution and more legal payload than comparable models.

Standard features include Jerr-Dan's exclusive No-Lube technology with greaseless major pivot points and composite slide pads for reduced maintenance costs. Other standard features include chain storage pockets, adjustable tilt-stabilizer bumpers and eight key slots for easy tie-downs. An optional Zero-Degree Wheel Lift design provides clearance to load and tow even the lowest profile cars. Visit www.jerr-dan.com

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Top New Tires

Toyo Tire U.S.A. Corp. has rolled out two new sizes of its Toyo M154 ultra-premium, regional-highway commercial tire. The two new sizes are 265/75R22.5 and 245/75R22.5, both in load range G.

The M154 incorporates Toyo Tires' E-balance design technology, which improves both endurance and resistance to irregular

wear. Ideal for steer applications but well suited for use in any position, this new tire helps to reduce fuel consumption while delivering reliable operation.

Of interest also are the Toyo M143 and M608Z, both product lines recently expanded to include a size of 225/70R19.5 in load range G, ideal for the Ford F450 and F550. The M143 is an all-position, all-steel low-profile radial; the M608Z is a premium-drive axle tire with an extra wide block and lug pattern for challenging uses.



Toyo: two top new truck tires

The Toyo Tires brand has been rated number-one Overall Brand for Medium Truck Tires in *Tire Review* magazine's annual Tire Brand Study of North American tire dealers four years in a row. Visit toyo.com

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Ridemakerz: 40 bodies & colors

ferent bodies and paint schemes, including Dodge Vipers, Ford Mustangs, and the Chevrolet Corvette C6.R and C6RS for the fast and furious. Or the Mini Cooper S might be the way to go for motoring lovers. Roll in style in the Scion xB or customize a Ford 250 SuperChief or Dodge Ram.

Ridemakerz also offers retro hot rods, stock race cars, cab-over fire engines, dump trucks, and tow trucks. Options include side pipes, engines, tire and rims, paint schemes and graphic decals, all revved up with lights, sound and even remote-control.

The Ridemakerz experience invites customizers into the ultimate car customizing garage, either online (www.ridemakerz.com) or at one of 12 shops nationwide. If purchased online, the "ride" is shipped unassembled, along with an ignition key-shaped hex wrench, so you, the kids, and/or pals can build the ride together.

"The display is continuously updated during each trip"

Inline Spring Brakes

With Inline brand spring brakes and properly maintenance, truck operators can significantly reduce the risk of costly service calls and unscheduled downtime. Distributed through Kenworth and Peterbilt dealers, Inline spring brakes are engineered and manufactured to make them much less susceptible to premature failure and longer lasting.

THE GEAR MART

New & improved equipment from industry innovators



Inline spring brakes

Each Inline brake includes epoxy-coated steel power springs to help ensure a long-lasting tension that's highly resistant to corrosion from road salts, chemicals, and other contaminants, plus they are made for use in air brakes in all leading medium-duty and heavy-duty truck applications.

The push rod on the brakes has an indicator to help the operator determine when the stroke is too great and the brakes need adjusting or replacing. This feature allows the operator to determine easily and accurately when adjustments or brake shoe replacement are necessary. To find an Inline dealer, visit www.inlinetruckparts.com

Ford Picks Jerr-Dan

At this year's Chicago Auto Show, Worldwide Equipment Sales LLC was asked by Ford Motor Company to introduce the new 2009 Ford F-450 X-Cab complete with the state-of-the-art Jerr-Dan MPL-NG self-loading wrecker body. The Jerr-Dan MPL-NG has patented features that promote safety and damage-free towing, including a low-profile crossbar, self-leveling system, positive and negative tilt, and enclosed cylinders.

Worldwide Equipment Sales LLC is a



First Gear: '51 Ford tow truck replica

leading dealer of towing and recovery equipment, including a full line of light-, medium- and heavy-duty carriers and wreckers, industrial transporters, four-car carriers, Landoll hydraulic trailers, Wells Cargo enclosed trailers, and JB open trailers. Visit www.NewTowTrucks.com

1951 Towing Replica

In the 1950s, Ford added many trucks to its product line and the style of these trucks changed dramatically over the course of the decade. In 1951, the trucks received a number of upgrades. Over a million Fords were shipped in that year, including the 1951 Ford Tow Truck.

First Gear's 1/34-scale diecast replica includes special features such as authentic Ford badging, chrome grille, chrome left side mirror, detailed interior, tow booms, sheath and cables, tow sling, pulley detail, rear floodlights, and rear tow controls.

The truck also has dual-tire rear axles with detailed undercarriage and is made up of approximately 75 parts. This new replica of the Harrison Motor Service tow truck measures 7.25 inches long. Visit www.firstgreareplicas.com



Worldwide: Ford with Jerr-Dan body

New From Miller



Holmes 440-SL

One of the most popular light-duty units ever built was the Holmes 440. It was an industry standard for economy and dependability for over 25 years.

The same spirit lives on in the Holmes 440-SL, an auto loader that includes a 8,000-pound boom, 8,000-pound planetary winch, and an auto-load wheel lift system rated at 4,000 pounds.

The hydraulic functions can all be operated from the lanyard controller in the cab, including hooking up to parallel-parked vehicles at a 90-degree angle. The steel modular body is adjustable in a width up to 94 inches and includes two spacious tool compartments. Visit your Holmes distributor or see www.millerind.com



The Snatcher

The Snatcher

A lightweight compact unit durable enough to stand up to rigorous use for repos and towing, the Snatcher by Holmes is operated by a 12-volt electric/hydraulic pump system that connects to your vehicle's power supply.

All functions of folding/unfolding, extending/retracting, raising/lowering, and opening/closing the wheel claws can be done from the inside of the cab of your truck.

The unit is easily installed in the bed of a three-quarter or one-ton pickup and is rated at 3,500 pounds, although actual towing capacity will vary depending on your truck. The Snatcher is ideal for repo

work, moving vehicles around lots or in parking ramps or garages, and light-duty towing. It is capable of hooking up at 90-degree angles. Visit your Holmes distributor or see www.millerind.com

V-30 Upgrade

A few years ago, Vulcan introduced a medium-duty integrated 16-ton towing and recovery unit, the Vulcan V-30, which can handle a wide range of vehicles from



New Vulcan V-30

autos through straight trucks, vans, buses, and city tractors.

Several years later, Vulcan introduced a high-impact-resistant composite body on their auto loaders and light-duty conventional units.

These two concepts have come together in the new Vulcan V-30 with a 120-inch CA modular composite body made from molded structural components, not a metal framework with plastic veneer panels like some on the market. The composite body has large suicide doors on the front compartments with a tunnel.

A second tall compartment on each side, as well as a fully enclosed control compartment, provides spacious storage space for towing and recovery equipment. A wide range of storage brackets are incorporated to stow fork holders, forks, wheel grids, chains and snatch blocks. Visit your Vulcan distributor or see www.millerind.com

VIEWS YOU CAN USE

How some tow companies go up in a down market

By Andrea Evans

Towing is an industry known for resorting to price-cutting when the competition gets tougher, a questionable practice. In response, Footnotes consulted three top revenue-producing firms for advice on how to adapt profitably in today's very competitive market.

These companies have developed business practices and formulas that work well for them. Each has been in operation more than 20 years; they employ from 30 to 80 people.

Granted, they have the advantage of being large, well-run, well-off businesses, but whether your business is large or small, struggling or in the money, there are ideas here that any company can put to work.

"The first 90 days of 2008 we struggled with the horrendous fuel prices and shifting customer base," said Geoff Russell of Kauff's Towing Inc. in Florida. "We certainly didn't give up and we finished 2008 the same as 2007. And that's pretty remarkable here in south Florida. Basically all residential, all building, all infrastructure construction has gone away. It's pretty dismal for the small building contractors here."

Others also found success in this down market. "We had a great 2008," said Charles Napoli of C and L Towing in New Jersey. "While other people are telling me they are going backwards — they're off 10, 20 or 30 percent — we've managed to grow at a straight 12 percent."

"For the most part, the professional operators in the industry are in better shape than most of our counterparts [customers]," Russell continued. "Face it, whether it's police-driven or a breakdown, they have to use our services when they need them."

Out Of Pocket

Russell was forward-thinking in terms of business sustainability for 2009. "For those people that manage their business by a balance sheet and income statement, those companies are going to survive," he said. "For the guy running his business from the left pocket to the right pocket and dispatching from the front seat of his truck, it's going to get harder and harder to meet the expectations of customers."

"We literally re-invent our customer base on a daily basis," he added. "We take the time with our customers, both commercial and cash calls. We explain the value-added of our services: clean competent drivers, safe well-maintained equipment, full insurance coverage, and we can tell customers when



Reynolds Towing Service Inc. of Illinois

they will see our trucks, within 10 or 15 minutes."

He continued: "Do we get all the calls that come in? Absolutely not, but we've more than doubled our revenues in southeast Florida since 2003. We've maintained our revenue in this down market for two and a half years."

Repeat Business

"We never leave a customer with a bad feeling about the job or company. Drivers, dispatchers, managers — everybody is trained in this same way," said Napoli. "Sure, we get some difficult and irate people but we have great clientele. Ninety percent is repeat clientele, and we're not the cheapest around, that's for sure."

According to Russell, "Kauff's is driven by meeting and exceeding the customers' expectations. Companies that want to survive must take the time to educate their customers about the value of towing company services. If customers keep saying they are only willing to pay X amount, you better know what it's costing you to meet that customer's expectation. It doesn't matter if it's a motor club, a dealership, or a police agency."

"I'm going to say that 80 percent of towers out there don't know what it costs to run their business," he continued. "They know their immediate expense, payments, and mortgage, but they don't know about secondary costs. The phone bill should be a percentage of all tow calls; insurance and damage

claims should be a percentage. It's the law of averages; over time you are going to damage some vehicles."

"I'm great with my numbers," said Napoli. "I was a Road One company a few years back. I know exactly what our company makes, what each truck makes and what it costs to operate."

"You grow from listening to people with a high level of professionalism," he added. "Talk together; ask each other what you do in this situation. You've got to be smart enough to walk away from work when you aren't going to make any money."

Spread 'Em Out

"There's no such thing as operating at a loss and making it up in volume in this business," said Russell. "Every group of tows needs to stand on its own. You've got to anticipate some costs and spread them out equitably over all calls. Sure, you don't know what fuel will cost next week or what maintenance, insurance, and damage claims may be, but you've got to anticipate. Somewhere down the road you're going to have a mechanical breakdown or a tire blow. The last guy you towed used up some of your engine, tires, clutch, and brakes. Anticipate and distribute, you can't cover it all by one customer, that's for sure."

"I don't keep work just to keep my competitor out of it," said Napoli. "No matter what your industry, you've got to know your costs. You've got to add a profit. It took me 15 years before I was

mature enough to look at a customer and say, 'I'm really here to make a profit, not just tow cars and trucks.' I hate to say it took me a good 15 years to wake up and say, 'I need to make money. I don't need to practice any more — I'm a professional.'"

A Larger Role

The three company owners assert that training is playing a larger role in the industry. "Training is not just important when it comes to saving people's lives. Training is important just to be professional," said Gregory Reynolds of Reynolds Towing Service Inc. of Illinois. "People don't think it takes much to be a tow truck driver; they equate it with a dirt bag. It's not that way anymore. We have to professionalize with the cars and trucks of today."

"We attend WreckMaster; we have a classroom and do on-the-job training constantly," said Napoli. "DOT personnel come in to update us about new laws and regulations. We have seminars on Hazmat; any training we can offer employees, we do. We're large enough that we can hire people [professional trainers] to come do seminars and talk to 20 or 30 employees at a time."

"We spend a lot of time upgrading training, on par with municipal police, fire, and ambulance agencies," said Reynolds. "Now I'm not suggesting our guys are as skilled as an ambulance

TRUCK TALK

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But Jamieson's father sold his towing service and moved into salvage two years before Jamieson was ready to hop into a tow truck of his own. The younger Jamieson was devastated.

"I couldn't wait until I was 18, and he sold out when I was 16," Jamieson said. "I was so disappointed. It was like the rug being pulled out from under you. I was heartsick over it. My dad had one of the bigger towing companies in the area."

Jamieson decided to get into trucking. "But my heart was always in the towing industry," he said. "I couldn't drive down the road without stopping at a wreck or catching up with a tow truck to see who it was."

Jamieson bought his first tow truck – a new Ford 4WD – in 1986 and slowly let his trucking business dwindle. Gradually, he built his towing service. Now, Jamieson's J&M Towing – named for Jamieson and his best friend Dennis Maynard – has nearly two dozen trucks and 20 or so employees at its three locations.

Specialty Work

J&M Towing specializes in police towing and heavy recovery. "I've always gone for the specialty stuff," Jamieson said. "Then I wasn't competing with every wrecker running up and down the road. I went for specialty trailers and specialty trucks. We do underwater recovery, aircraft recovery."

J&M Towing's list of jobs is as impressive as his flashy fleet. Jamieson said his towers have pulled an Airbus 320 back on the runway, towed airplanes out of cornfields and out of trees, and hauled a Lear jet out of a cemetery after it aborted takeoff. Recovering the Lear jet took two days and eight workers.

But just as exhilarating as his jobs is tinkering with his trucks.

That first tow truck he bought is still around. The cab and chassis rusted out, so Jamieson rebuilt the back end of it, mounted it on the rear of a 1996 Ford and turned it into a monster truck



The "WreckMaster"

that, said Jamieson, "is built for show and go. We use it in parades and take it out and drag people out of the woods."

The 50-ton Oshkosh was built over 18 months in Jamieson's shop after he bought it from another company.

Truck Love

And then there is Jamieson's thing for bling. He's had that "from truck one," he said. His first truck featured tinted windows and extra lights, and he hasn't stopped outfitting them since.

"We've got probably the best-looking trucks in the state of Michigan," said Shane LaBelle, who has worked for Jamieson for 16 years. "Everybody knows we have good-looking trucks." Jamieson "is into his trucks," LaBelle added. "He's like a big kid. He loves his trucks."

Along with making sure he has plenty of shine, Jamieson takes special care to design the graphics that end up on his trucks. He also makes sure his driv-

ers keep the trucks shining. "They're responsible for keeping it equipped and clean," Jamieson said. "The guys who take care of the trucks the best get the newest trucks, so I got a healthy competition going on in the company. It's really helped me."

Keeping his fleet shiny, though, is no easy task. "It never quits, just keeping them clean," said Jamieson, whose personal cars include a 2008 Jeep Commander and an orange-and-white 1969 Z28. "Chrome looks great when it's clean, but it looks extra bad when it's dirty."

Show Winners

Jamieson has kept his trucks looking good and has proof with trophies from tow shows in Michigan and Ohio. He doesn't fret the details of most of his victories, but his first-place trophy from Michigan has a special place.

"I remember winning in Michigan," he said. "It took me forever to win first place. We've won some beauty contests, but I was especially proud of winning in Michigan."

So why does Jamieson go all out – spending so much extra money and time on his trucks? It's a question he often hears. "Everybody says, 'Why do you spend so much money on your trucks? They don't make you any more money,'" he said. "What they don't realize is that it's helped me capture some of the premier drivers. It's also kept up morale. I think keeping them in newer equipment and trying to be fair with them, it's just a sense of pride."

Jamieson admits he has dialed back during the economic downturn. "We've had to pull in our horns a little bit," he said. "We're definitely not planning to buy any new equipment real soon. We're cutting costs like everybody else to make sure we come out on the other side and come out on top."

Still, Jamieson can't resist splurging on making his trucks stand out. And sometimes, he can't resist hopping into one of them when he has a chance to drive. "I'm not out there every day, but if we're backed up, I'm not going to keep a customer waiting," he said. "I'll get in a truck and do it to it." 



Jamieson's jacked-up Ford F350

You are cordially invited to join the Minnesota Professional Towing Association in celebration of the MPTA's service to the towing industry August 6–8, 2009.

Minnesota Professional Towing Association is hosting a towing show at the Treasure Island Resort and Casino in Welch, MN, just minutes from Red Wing including educational sessions, seminars, TRAA certification testing, a "Best in Show" "light duty" and "heavy duty" tow truck contest, recognition banquet, and lots of time for networking and visiting with MPTA partners.

Do not forget the kids! Treasure Island's new non-smoking family center boasts a state of the art bowling recreation center complete with a full arcade for all ages to enjoy and do not forget about the splashing good time at the pool!

For more information please contact MPTA at 1-800-627-MPTA or visit our web site at www.mnprotow.org

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VIEWES YOU CAN USE

continued from page 14

attendant or paramedic but the training employees receive adds value to our services.

Gaining Respect

Reynolds Towing Service recently participated in three days of cross-training with the Urbana-Champaign fire departments. One phrase of training was simulated entrapment extrication with a car under a semi. Fire department personnel were unable to remove the crash dummy from the wreck in the 20 minutes allotted.

"Then they timed us with the rotor. It was a much different time. How much more they respected us after that training together," said Reynolds. "The following Tuesday there was a bad accident on the interstate. A Honda Odyssey ran into the back of a semi. Our response time was 11 minutes. The fire department tried to get the van out before we arrived. We raised up the semi and winched-out the van. The driver did lose her left arm but response time and training with the fire department are what saved that lady's life."

"We have an in-house certification training. Later, we send drivers to WreckMaster and TRAA certifications," said Susan Jepson of Reynolds Towing. "In our new building, we have a training room and a library. The library houses a variety of training tapes and

"They have to use our services when they need them"

all the different towing magazines."

"We do training in our back lot," added Reynolds. "We'll turn vehicles over and demonstrate how to right them. Like police and fire, we are trying to get everybody certified."

Kauff's actually has a nationally certified trainer on staff. "I believe we are one of very few in the country that do that," said Russell. "We also have a full-time safety manager who is a retired Florida Highway Patrol officer." This permits Kauff's to conduct its own accident investigations, DOT filings, and criminal background checks.

"Doing all that not only provides service to our customer but to the company," added Russell. "We have a very low driver turnover rate."

Employee Bennies

"Our employee retention is close to 95 percent now," said Napoli. "We pay top dollar in our market. Drivers are paid hourly and time and a half, and Motor Carrier [state regulatory agency] doesn't require us to. We pay part



Geoff Russell, president, Kauff's Inc., and Richard Kauff, operations manager

of their benefits. We pay for uniforms and do things like parties to keep morale up."

"Drivers are salaried with commission on call," said Reynolds. "We provide 401K, life insurance policy, vaca-



Charles Napoli, owner, C and L Towing, East Hanover, NJ

tion, sick and holiday pay. We pay half of their health insurance; they pay for children. We have a profit-sharing program that gets distributed at the end of each year."

"A good light-duty tower has the ability to make annual wages in excess of industry norms for drivers of similar tasks, like route delivery for soda and construction," said Russell. "Plus our drivers have the ability to put in extra hours. That's not the case for route-delivery drivers. Towing is 24/7 but guys that say they're always on call, that's not right either. Give the driver some down time or he's not going to function well for you at all when he's on."

The Pro Image

Owners and staff of companies like these know the importance of professionalism on the phone, on the road, on the scene, in the office, in the truck cab, and the storage yard.

Dispatchers answer calls on the first or second ring. They pronounce the company name clearly. When necessary to put the caller on hold, dispatchers wait for the caller's response before doing so. While the caller is on hold, he or she listens to friendly upbeat promotional messages describing the company's qualifications and added

values.

"We want our trucks to look professional and fully equipped. We want our drivers to look and be professional," said Reynolds. "Our customers are bankers, lawyers, university professors, students, administrators, and the like. When we pick up their vehicles — Mercedes, Volvos and all — they ride in our trucks. We want [the trucks] clean and looking good. When we pull onto a scene, we want to impress an officer. We look professional and our drivers work professional. The right truck and a trained driver can clear a scene in half the time."

Napoli gave an example of firm company action in response to unprofessional employee behavior: "I hate to say it but occasionally you've got to let a really good driver go due to disciplinary action. Last year I had to let go of a driver I admired a lot. We have a rule: We don't tolerate any disrespect to a customer right, wrong, or indifferent. Once his actions were confirmed, I had to make an example of him, unfortunately. A lot of companies are afraid to reprimand a really good driver. I understand you don't want to lose a good operator [but] you make a rule, you've got to stick to it. You really do."

Trucks & Mortar

"Our trucks are not the newest," said Russell. "Nothing is older than 2004 but every two years our trucks are run through the shop again. We stay on top of PM work and required maintenance. We repaint and make sure the interiors are impeccable. Also with the new building [opened April 2007], we spent \$200,000 on state-of-the-art wash bays. So our guys wash the trucks and keep them up."

"Our trucks are like driving billboards," said Susan Jepson. "All are painted alike with same logo, symmetrical and identifiable. Our colors are blue and white with transit orange. We did this for two reasons: First, they show up very well; second, we wanted to match the colors of the University of Illinois." Reynolds does a lot of business for and around the university, including hauling for its football team.

"One thing that helps our professional image is our new building right along the interstate," said Jepson of Reynolds Towing. "We just moved from

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a 9,000-square-foot building to a 40,000-square-foot building. It's a very nice, big building, and attractive sign. We added a training room, large conference room, a small conference room, and additional offices. Our dispatch area is very professional. We have an office with a waiting area when people come to pick up their cars. Customers can see uniformed dispatchers at work. It's like going into a bank."

Pride Counts

"We have a professional image so that people respect us as a business rather than a low-life towing company," said Jepson. "In fact, we've had

police from five different agencies in the area tour our facility. It helps them see that we have a more professional image."

Napoli expressed pride in his operation. "I'm surrounded with a great team. Our managers and 80-plus employees are dedicated. Our turnover is minimal. These men and women really go the extra mile to service our customers. It's great knowing my company supports so many families."

Concluded Russell, "We are in the 20 percent of the industry that understands costs and customers' expectations. If a company has been in business for 20 or 30 years, they understand the business. They've got a formula that works." ❖

Towing Isn't Free!

Why motorists don't like to pay us

"Perception is everything." If you're in business, you've likely heard that expression often. Geoff Russell, president of Kauff's Inc., related this story about changing customer perceptions:

"Sometimes peoples' expectations are unrealistic based on their perception of value. Few people perceive there's any value to towing. If they spend \$8000 or \$9000 to replace a truck engine, they perceive they will get another \$200,000 or \$300,000 in value from that truck [but] if they spend \$800 or \$900 for towing that truck, they perceive the money's gone at the end of the day. They didn't get any enjoyment out of it. All it did was transport the truck from the place of breakdown to the place of repair. It doesn't add value to that truck — and it's even worse for a car and light-duty towing.

It's Not Fair

"Auto owners will say 'I'm a motor club member so towing is free.' Towing certainly isn't free. Yet if their washing machine breaks down, they will gladly pay \$200 or \$300 for the repair of a machine that has little or no commercial value. They [washing machine owners] call the retailer for service, describe the problem, and get put on hold for 15 minutes to talk to a service writer.

"When the service writer takes the call, the customer repeats the problem description. Then, the service writer agrees to schedule a repair visit, two to 10 days later usually. Next the service writer says 'We'll need \$85 to come to the house and we take payment for that now.' The retailer charges the customer's credit card that day. The [washing machine] repairperson is dispatched several days later. Charges for the parts and labor are separate.

"The \$85 was for the service call, for a repairperson to show up in the driveway with a \$10,000 to \$15,000 van and a few thousand dollars worth of tools. The repairperson installs a \$12 part and charges the customer another \$120 or so. The customer is delighted with the \$200 to \$300 repair bill because he/she is desperate for clean clothes and perceives the service worth the costs.

A Bad Deal

"Yet car owners call tow companies demanding instantaneous service for free, or almost. The car owner is frantic; he/she or the wife or daughter is broke down on a dangerous highway or a plaza parking lot. The car owner/motor club member wants service in 30 minutes or less by a well-trained operator who is willing to take financial responsibility for the second most important asset the customer owns [besides his/her house]. And the car owner perceives that service is worth \$25 or \$30?"

"Motor clubs today want to pay less to have a car towed three to five miles than what it costs to get a good car wash. In the car wash business, there's [low] to no overhead, no liability for the automobile, and little to no risk. If they break a car antenna, it cost them \$50.

"Is the car owner's low perceived value of towing a bad deal for the industry? I look at it as an opportunity to educate customers about the value-added of our service from professional drivers and safe, well-maintained equipment to full insurance coverage and reliable timely response.

"The guy coming in [to the industry] saying 'I'm going to be the low-cost provider' doesn't understand the business. Really, price is the last thing. First, you've got to provide service, reliability, training, financial responsibility, and liability insurance. These come first and price becomes the backend.

"In fact, it's very rare that we lose a customer permanently. If we are losing them solely over price, 95 percent of the time they come back and say 'Can we meet halfway or somewhere along that line because it turns out, the new towing service provider with the lower price also offered less service.'

"Frequently, cash customers call back within 30 minutes to two hours because their low-cost towler hasn't shown up or has re-qualified the rate and will 'pick-up the customer's vehicle when it's convenient, maybe sometime tomorrow.'

Educating Clients

"Unfortunately and historically, it's been all too easy for this type of operator to enter the industry. But, I think with the financial crisis of 2009 and possibly 2010, it will restrict the ease of entry for low-end service providers. So for new businesses, banks will likely be looking at 20 to 30 percent down and their [new business owners'] credit will have to be gold.

"For the guy running his business from one pocket to the other pocket and dispatching from the driver's seat, it's going to get harder and harder to meet the expectations of customers. What's more interesting with some of these small operators, the price differential is so phenomenal. In many cases they could raise their pricing levels 100 percent and still be below the professional towler's rates.

"Here's the thing, towing and recovery companies that want to succeed are going to have to take the time to invest in educating clientele to change customers' perceptions. If customers remain unwilling to meet your cost and provide you a reasonable profit, it's not a matter of 'Are you going to go broke?' It's a matter of when you are going to go broke.

"These low-end service providers, for lack of a better label, may not know it, but there is no such thing as operating at a loss and making it up in volume. It doesn't work that way in this business.

"Take the time to make sure your corporate, commercial, and private-individual clients understand the job requirements and the added value your company's service personnel and equipment assures in recovery and transport of customers' prized possessions, their cars and trucks."

— Andrea Evans

TOW TECH

The Agile Airbag

Its uses are limited only by your imagination

By Torrey Meeks

Airbag recovery is a versatile field. One that encompasses much more than uprighting tractor trailers. "The only limit to airbags is the limit of your imagination," said Howard "Scooby" Eagan, owner of Big Truck Rescue Training and Consulting. "They can push, they can displace, they can move things out of the way. It doesn't end."

After decades of experience in the field as an operator and in the classroom as an instructor, Eagan knows airbags. From floating a car off the bottom of the lake to training firefighters, he's done it. And that's led him to the firm conviction that using airbags only for rollover recoveries is a big mistake.

Shifts & Hits

"Depending on how you want to branch your business out, there are just tons of avenues for air cushions,"



A good lift from MatJack air bags

Eagan said. "The biggest is shifted loads and bridge hits. I've done more shifted loads and bridge hits than I have uprighted tractor trailers."

Those are the real money makers, according to Eagan, who uses the Jumbo Safe Lift line designed by Bill Jackson. In the past it used to take Eagan, four or five guys, a forklift, and about six hours to do a load shift. Now, he can go to a job with two guys, pop in his airbags without having to offload the

See TOW TECH, page 18

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TOW TIPS

Hauling Haulers

How to tow those portable parking lots

By Richard Wolfe

I think most towers would agree that next to buses and motor homes, the hardest thing to tow is a car hauler, or “portable parking lot” as some call them. Problems that towers run into include low ground clearances, long overhangs, low fifth-wheel plates, and even issues with the overall height of the unit. Also, vehicles mounted over the hauler unit’s cab can be an issue because of height and front overhang. Despite these issues, towing these units can be done safely and profitably if care is taken during the job.

Generally speaking, there are two kinds of car hauler units. One is the high-mount trailer system. This is just like a normal tractor-trailer attachment at the fifth wheel; the trailer sits low to the ground and its long overhang permits more vehicles to be transported. Just like we towers do, the hauler unit owners try to max out the space on the trailer for maximum revenue. The high-mount is generally an easy system to tow with not too many problems. Length of overhang and total unit height are the main concerns here.

Then there is the low-mount system, which has a fifth wheel off the back of the unit that sits anywhere from five to 10 inches off the ground. This is the nightmare unit most tow operators hate to deal with. Clearance of the fifth-wheel plate is the major problem.

Height Issues

Some towers attempt to raise the low-mount’s air ride adjustment bar for the air suspension system to help get clearance, but this also changes the angle on the rear drive shaft, possibly causing it to hit the bolts and damage them, or, worse, to fall out. This can also cause the unit to become over-height, which could result in all the vehicles on top becoming convertibles!

There are ways to get some height, but the best method is to let the air suspension do its job. The air tanks usually include a main tank and another one to control the air suspen-

“He missed being mowed down by two tractor trailers”

sion. The trick is to find the air suspension tank. I run one air line to the main air tank and then one to keep the air-suspension system filled up. Of course, if you can get to the air compressor main line, you can air the system there, but on some units, that is almost impossible because of short cabs and owners’ efforts to get as much cargo room as possible.

I have had the usual problems with drivers, dispatchers, and mechanics at the car hauler companies telling me only answer is to flat-tow the units. Then they shake their heads when I bring it in lifted but not rubbing tires or dragging.

Major Job

There are other issues to deal with when towing car haulers. Front vehicle overhang is one. Watch your boom height with regard to the vehicle located on the upper deck. With integrated booms, the winch swivels will be close to or touching the bottom of the top vehicle before you even get the lift under the hauler.

Another issue results from the fact that most car hauler owners love those deep Texas bumpers with all those lights on them. It’s hard to get a wheel lift under such a unit and not cause damage when towing or even just lifting it. At times, it’s back to removing bumpers to gain access to the towing points. Lifting or winching onto blocks can also do the job of getting you under the bumper.

See TOW TIPS, page 21



Miller Industries’ Titan T-Series high-mount hauler

Modern MatJack

Historic but still young



Big Orange hard at work

In the early days when John Sweezy Jr., CEO of MatJack, hit the trade show circuit, “MatJack who?” was a common refrain. He doesn’t hear that much anymore.

“When I came to MatJack it was the end of 1986,” Sweezy said. “It was a good opportunity, and virtually every industry MatJacks are sold to I’d worked in at that point in my life.”

MatJack sold good products, but it’d hit a brick wall in terms of growth, Sweezy said. The company was “extremely small at that time,” and had a limited but regular sales area around the East Coast, he said.

Sweezy took over in the late 1980s. The company had a solid reputation and the small black MatJack cushions were a reliable product manufactured with pride and high standards. After the shareholders voted to put him in the ring as CEO, he doubled sales his first three years at the helm, “and I never looked back,” Sweezy said.

Bill Jackson, who’d been perfecting his square, slope-topped Jumbo Safe Lift airbags for nearly three decades, soon approached Sweezy about becoming the sole distributor of the Jumbo air cushion line.

The year was 1989. Sweezy didn’t hesitate to take Jackson up on the deal, further cementing his company as a standard setter in the industry. MatJack’s five-year warranty on all products is a longer guarantee than any of his competitors offer, Sweezy noted. “When I took over we were selling three high-pressure bags,” he said. “By then we were up to seven or eight. Presently we sell nine different sizes of cushions, high pressure and low pressure. We build custom products. They come to us, we’ll build it.”

He stayed committed to quality over the years, and kept an eye on his manufacturing facilities in Indianapolis and later, Europe. Currently he sells the only air cushion line that is ISO 9000 certified, to his knowledge. Today the company conducts business in over 100 countries and while the stormy economic times haven’t completely spared MatJack, it’s in good shape.

While Bill Jackson’s fundamental Jumbo design hasn’t changed over the years, Sweezy’s made some small but time- and back-saving improvements. A call for feedback brought gripes about the air cushion control panel’s height and portability. That led to telescoping legs and a swivel mount.

Quick-clearance shops who wanted to use bags but couldn’t due to inflate times led to retrofitted hoses and gaskets. The bags inflate in 14 minutes now rather than 35, a 62 percent improvement, and the hose couplings are more manageable.

“When it comes down to it at the end of the day, if someone has a problem with a bag we sold, we take care of it immediately,” Sweezy said. “That’s the way you keep happy people.”

TOW TECH

continued from page 17

whole trailer, inflate, and be done in 30 minutes. “Why shouldn’t I make the same money as some guy who doesn’t know how to do it with airbags and doesn’t want to learn? And I’m making that money in a fraction of the time,” Eagan said.

“Using airbags only for rollovers is a big mistake”

Eagan is also a devout believer in using air cushions on bridge hits. Because cushions don’t take up as much room as a wrecker, a lane of traffic can reliably be kept open while the trailer floats on the bags and the recovery crew gets it in shape to be hauled. “When I go out there and do a recovery job, I use airbags to make my job easier, safer, and more efficient,” Eagan said. “I’ve got a guy who uses airbags to pop tires off in the shop when they’re stuck on. Better than getting under there and pounding with a hammer.”

The different ways to make money off non-traditional uses of airbags are nearly limitless as well, Eagan said. He’s done everything from jacking up houses with cushions to lifting heavy industrial machinery. “We had these metal plates and set them on top of the airbags, put pipes through the machines, popped them up, and then skated the whole thing out through the door,” Eagan said.

Cutting Edge

Jeff Martin, Manager at Diamond Towing & Float Services and an instructor with Eagan at Big Truck Rescue, finds airbags to be endlessly useful as well. As one of the first adopters of landing bags, he’s on the cutting edge of cushion technology. “You can use landing bags on everything: Loaded or empty mixers, dump trucks, buses,” Martin said. “I probably use landing bags 10 times more than I do uprighting bags.”

Martin likes the manpower reduction, the professional look, and the safety granted by using landing bags. He doesn’t have to worry about vehicles slamming down, and they cut down on wear and tear to a wrecker.

“When you control a vehicle to the ground with just a wrecker, the nose will drop ahead of the trailer and that’ll make look like it’s all twisted. That’s normal, but the perception of people watching, they think you’re twisting the truck,” Martin said. “With a full set of control bags, it brings the entire unit over in one easy motion and sets it down really nice.”



John Sweezy, MatJack

Coming up, staying up

From an incident management point of view, landing bags are priceless, Martin said. They allow a recovery operation to maneuver and work in tight spots and keep traffic moving safely. Many times landing bags can be set up with ease in an area that'd be dicey or impossible for a control vehicle to effectively maneuver in. "Landing bags have made us a lot of money, more than our airbags actually," Martin said.

In The Water

Another way to take advantage of airbags profitably is underwater recovery, according to John Sweezy, CEO of MatJack (see "Modern Mat-Jack," previous page), which distributes a wide range of cushions including the Jumbo Safe Lift line. "Underwater bags are a good way to expand a business," Sweezy said.

While underwater recovery might appear intimidating up front, the relatively low cost to get a set of underwater bags can lead to some big returns for shops that do business around bodies of water, Sweezy said. A wide variety of vehicles and boats end up in the water on a regular basis, he said, and with good training it can add a whole new dimension to recovery work.

"Once you get a vehicle off the bottom and it's broken loose, then there's nothing to winching it in," Sweezy said. "Underwater bags work on the same principle as regular air cushions. Basically, you're just taking strain off the truck."

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SLIDING AXLE HEAVY DUTY TRANSPORT TRAILERS

Ron's Remarkable Riverbank Recovery

By Gary Lund

One fall morning, a tractor-trailer that was also pulling a shorter, single-axle pup trailer took on a load of wood chips from a mill in Chetwynd, British Columbia. It then proceeded along Highway 97 for delivery to Canfor in Prince George, BC.

South of Chetwynd, early in the morning, the driver suffered a coughing fit and blacked out. His Freightliner went off the road and rolled down an embankment toward the river, making one complete rotation.

The force of the roll and the weight of the cargo tore away the pup trailer's rear wall and three-quarters of the wood chips spilled out. The unit came to rest on its wheels, but at a considerable tilt due to the slope of the embankment and about 130 feet down from the road only a few steps from the river.

Had the truck left the road only 10 feet sooner, the much-steeper slope at that point would have launched the truck into the water upside down. The driver suffered some cuts and bruises,

and judging from the tower's report, perhaps a broken collar bone as his arm was in a sling.

Day One

Ron's Towing from Prince George initially sent one wrecker to the site. Harold Heakes of Ron's arrived a little after noon with his unit, a 1998 Kenworth with a 9055 Century wrecker. The freight company sent Dale Presley, its safety officer, and Rick Miller, the terminal manager. There were two flaggers as well, both from Caribou Road Service of Chetwynd, which was north of Prince George.

The road conditions at the time of the accident were good. But when Heakes arrived about one p.m., it was raining. He and the others considered the safest way to deal with the casualty. The truck rested at an angle that made it far too dangerous for anyone to attempt to unpin the units where they sat.

Heakes explained: "Among the three of us who were there at the time, we figured we would try to bring the truck

and the trailers up the bank to the road and then try to split them, because if we split them down there, they were surely going to roll."

But the sections had to be split before bringing them right up onto the road. Heakes explained why: "I wanted to bring it up to the bank in one piece. But those chip trailers are pretty low to the ground. I didn't think I could round the bank with it all as a unit. That would have been a tough pull. Plus I didn't have enough room on the other side for everything to cross the road."

So he brought the truck and trailers up the bank to near the top ridge of the embankment, just below the road's shoulder. Once this had been done, Heakes quit early due to the pouring rain and stayed overnight in Chetwynd.

Day Two

On the following day, Ron's sent a second truck to join Heakes. Operated by Darren Davis, it is a 1994 Western Star, equipped with a 7035 Century wrecker.

Heakes described the team's efforts. "On the second day, we had the second truck show up early in the morning. We split the truck from the lead trailer. When we did that, I had ahold of the truck and Darren, with the Western Star, had hold of the trailer because the pin was on the other side and it was still leaning to that side.

"When Rick (Miller) went down and pulled the pin, we had the truck secure so that nothing would happen. When Rick cleared out of the way, we brought the truck right up onto the road and then pulled it nine kilometers down to a pull-out.

"Then we returned to deal with the trailers. We brought both trailers up to the bank, hooked together, did the same thing again to split them. Then we brought the first trailer up onto the road."

It's Not Over!

When dealing with the second trailer, the towmen had to contend with a

See RIVER RECOVERY, page 21



TOW TIPS

continued from page 18



A low-mount car hauler loaded

The third issue is part of the overall height problem. The car haulers love to put low-profile tires on their units, and 20-inch, low-profile tires mean you have about three inches from the axle to the ground. Another problem is how close the loaded vehicles are to where the pivot point is; lift too high and they might rub, turn too sharp and they might hit.

Couple all these issues together and lifting and towing these units can be a major job.



The front overhang

Some Solutions

So how does one tow these units successfully? Axle-lifting is the best option for lifting as much as possible. You might also have to remove the front tires for clearance because a unit with a car on top will be close to 13-feet, six-inches-high to start with. Any lift on the front end could raise it enough to cause the top front vehicle to hit wires or bridges.

After lifting but before towing, you should measure the unit height front to back – you never know how tall it will actually be when you lift it two inches. Air suspension has ways of making unexpected adjustments that are not easily noticed.

So carefully double-check the unit when you are finally hooked up; then check it one more time. It is best if you are able to move the unit a short distance first and then check it again because some units will change heights when they start moving.

The real key to success with this special kind of job is to take the time that is usually necessary to do it right. ❖

RIVER RECOVERY

continued from page 20

collapsed wall, laden with wood chips, that was dragging behind the trailer and making it difficult to move. “We brought it up close to the edge of the

“The truck rested at an angle that was too dangerous”

road,” said Heakes, “but then we had to cut the wall, because it had all those chips on it.

“Dale went to Chetwynd and rented a cut-off saw. They sent him back with the wrong blade and no extra fuel. They said that fuel would last for four hours, but it only lasted 20 minutes so we didn’t even get the wall half-cut. Here we are in the middle of nowhere with a cut-off saw that ran out of fuel and had the wrong blade. So we just improvised and put a chain around it...and just winched it apart.”

Metal and wood chips weren’t the only obstructions the team had to clear away. “Before we even started this whole ordeal, we had to winch a bunch of trees out of the way,” said Heakes. And although a few trees had to be torn out, Mother Earth received something back — the spilled wood chips that were left behind were returned to the woods, presumably causing no environmental damage.

Safety First

Did this job present any special dangers, such as when unpinning the units? “Not really,” said Heakes. “Everything was secure. It’s safety first with us. That’s why we called in the second truck — for securement as well as for extra pull.”

Other safety considerations paid off as well, according to Heakes. “The hook on the front of the Freightliner broke at one point and the cable went sailing. But everyone has to stay away when we’re doing the winching. Nobody’s walking underneath cables or walking around the unit. Everybody’s standing far back — far enough away that they shouldn’t get hit (if a cable snaps).”

The crew finished at the scene at five p.m. At the pull-out, they pushed the walls of the second trailer together with a tow truck and had to chain and strap it together. By 7:30 they were able to leave.

A Landoll trailer was sent out the following day to pick up the second trailer, which was not towable on its own wheels. The trailers and the tractor were all successfully hauled to the freight company’s yard in Prince George.

Gary Lund is a Vancouver, British Columbia-based freelance writer and editor. Contact him at lundwriting@shaw.ca or 604-267-7460. This article was previously published in Tow Canada magazine. ❖

Roving With Ron’s

Ron’s Towing has about 12 drivers and 25 trucks, including large and small wreckers, flatbeds, and Landolls. Besides recoveries, the company moves a lot of equipment on the flat-beds.

Ron’s takes up to 100 to 125 calls per day, according to Heakes. They took on 1,900 jobs in September 2007 alone, but they are even busier in winter with 2,600 to 2,700 jobs per month.

And the company needs more drivers. Two other towing companies in

Prince George shut down recently. In at least one case, it was not because of a lack of business but rather a lack of drivers.

Harold Heakes of Ron’s said places like Chetwynd don’t have their own large wreckers so he goes to jobs there as well as in Tumbler Ridge, B.C., the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. Whether it’s towing or recovery work, Heakes jumps in his truck and takes care of it.

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TOW GEAR

Talking Tires

Take care to find the right wheels for your ride

By Dan Montegari

When it comes time to buy new tires, it seems there is always a dilemma when trying to select the correct ones. Keep a few simple tips in mind and the process should roll along as smoothly as your new tread.

1. You should select the same size and load ratings suggested by the manufacturer. Often, a tire salesperson will try to sell you tires that are oversized both in height and width, claiming they are safer. However, installing tires that are oversized can cause a number of problems, including less fuel economy and reduced vehicle handling. Incorrect tire size can also cause problems with front-end alignment and, once it is off specification, vehicle handling can be greatly affected, even causing premature tire wear.

2. Just because a tire is larger in size does not mean it is stronger or will handle better or carry a heavier load. Always make sure the tire is rated for the carrying load of the vehicle. Tire load is rated by letter, such as load range "D" or "E." Load range E will carry a heavier load than a D-rated tire. In most instances, tires on 2500- or 3500-series pickup trucks are rated load range E.

3. Always check the air pressure in your tires, especially if you are towing a trailer. When the pressure is below

the suggested minimum, tire damage and wear can occur rapidly. Low air pressure can cause excess heat and poor handling, too. A tire information packet should be on the driver's door jam. Look here for tire size, load rating, and pressure.

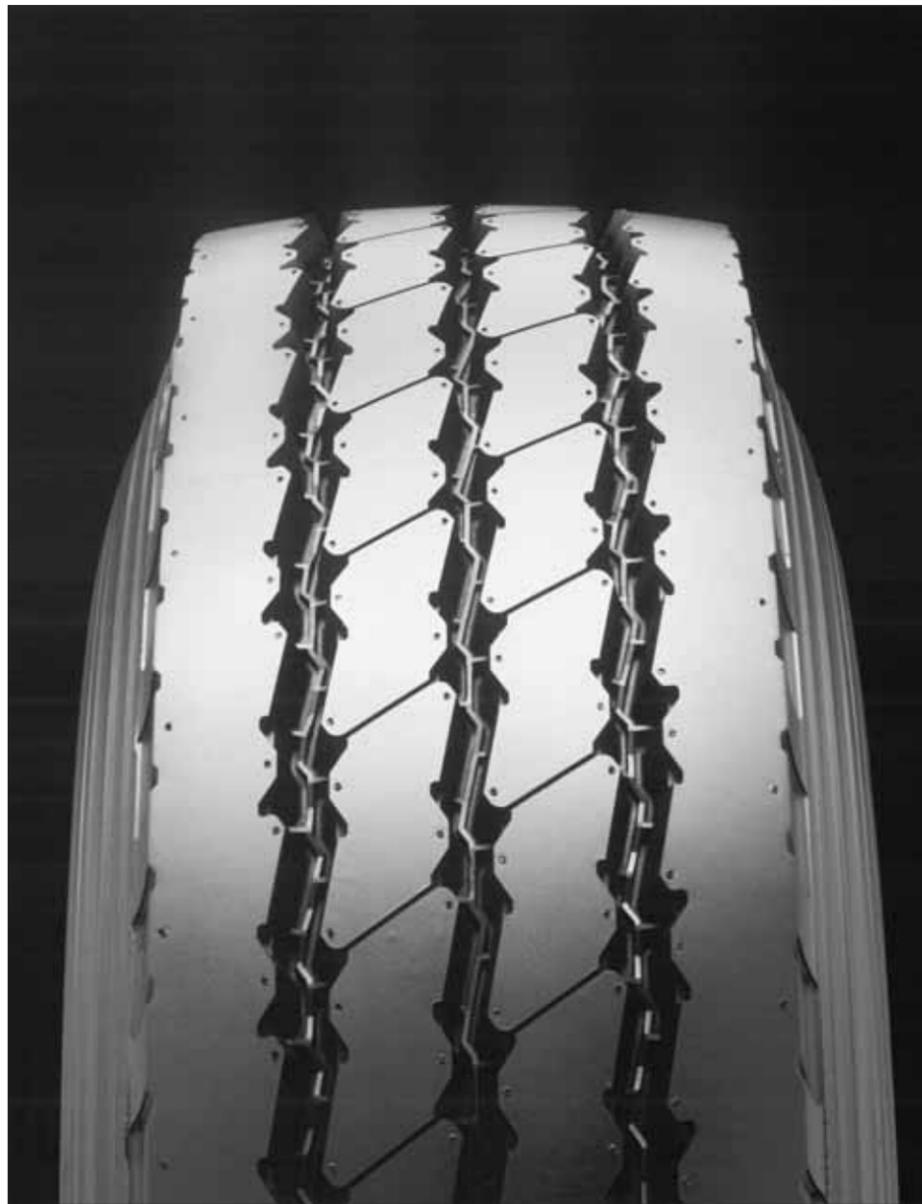
Operating under-inflated tires in warm and hot temperatures is dangerous, especially when towing a trailer or



Make sure these meet your needs

carrying a heavy load. When a tire is under-inflated, excess heat is generated and will cause sidewall or tread separation failure. I suggest that you check your tire pressure at least once per week and just before towing a heavier-than-usual load. Again, correct tire pressures can be found on the driver's side door jam.

4. Rotate and balance your tires. Years ago, this was a common practice,



but not today. Failure to rotate and balance on a regular basis causes premature tire wear. I suggest rotating your tires every 6000 miles and balancing the two front tires. If you follow this schedule, your tires will last a long time with no front-end vibration.

5. Be sure to select a tire that meets your needs. There are many brands of tires from which to select and everyone has their own preference. When selecting a tire make sure it fits your needs. If you take your vehicle off-road at times, you will need a different tread pattern than for a vehicle used strictly for on-road operation.

Some tires make noise due to an aggressive tread pattern. Personally, I do not like any tire that makes noise and have discovered that this type of tire wears more rapidly and gives a harder ride.

I am always asked which tires I use on my own truck and why. I have a home in the Adirondack Mountains and my driveway can be a challenge with mud and snow. I need a tire with a slightly aggressive tread for my driveway, but one that also has good on-road handling qualities for road trips.

Some years ago, I found a tire brand that filled all my needs and I have been using these tires ever since. They are Toyo Open Country A/T load range E tires. They have good ride quality, wear very well, make no noises and grip very well in rain or snow. These tires have a flexible side wall which helps with traction and gives above-average ride quality. Again, no matter which tire you select, make sure the size and weight ratings are correct.

6. Disregard the new fad to fill your tires with nitrogen for supposedly better fuel economy and to maintain correct pressures for a longer period of time. To me, this fad has no great benefit and is just a way to extract money from your wallet. There is no need to fill your tires with anything other than plain old free air. Choosing the appropriate tires and keeping a good maintenance schedule that includes regular air pressure checks and rotating and balancing are the keys to keeping you riding right.

Back To Basics

I have noticed tires are wearing out more quickly and need to be replaced

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more frequently than years ago. Is it tire compounds that have changed, or possibly vehicle suspension systems, road surfaces, or driving habits!

I don't think the problem of reduced tire life is all that complex but rather simple: We don't take care of our tires as well as we did in the past for a number of reasons. The first being that tires have gotten taller; instead of 14-inch tires, we now have 16-, 17-, or taller -inch tires on our SUVs and pickup trucks. Fourteen-inch tires would vibrate at 65 mph if they were out of balance, whereas a 17-inch tire vibrates at 75 to 80 mph.

Since we mostly do not drive at these high speeds we don't realize the tire is out of balance. An out-of-balance tire or a tire with low air pressure will develop additional wear patterns, causing a shortened service life. An out-of-balance tire can cause additional wear on front-end parts due to the excessive vibration.

A new trend also adds to shortened tire life and that is installing larger tires than stock tires. The look of larger tires is nice but the larger tire usually is not compatible with the front-end geometry of your vehicle, causing tire scuffing and additional wear, never mind sending the incorrect information to your computer from the vehicle speed sensor.

Tire Care Tips

I get about 50,000 to 55,000 miles to a set of tires. I rotate and balance my tires every 6,000 miles and keep the pressure within specifications. Keeping the proper air pressure in a tire is very important to reduce tire heat and maintain good wear across the tire face tread.

All vehicles have tire information decals located on the driver's door jams stating proper size and pressures. If you plan on replacing your tires make sure you replace them with the same load-range tires the vehicle manufacturer recommends. Reducing the load range of your tires can be dangerous especially when towing or carrying a load.

When replacing tires on a dual rear-wheel vehicle, caution must be used to maintain the stock gap between the rear tires. If the gap is not wide enough, a low tire may cause the tire wall to expand out to the side and when the two tires come in contact with each other, a blowout will almost always occur — and it always happens when carrying a load or towing a trailer. For this reason, I never recommend using oversize tires on a dual rear-wheel vehicle. You must always keep your tire pressures high enough within specifications so the gap between the rear tires is maintained to avoid causing a blowout of both tires.

Alignment Notes

A good way to determine if your front end is out of alignment is to inspect the tire wear patterns on your front tires:

- If you see the edges or one side of the tread wearing out, you have an alignment problem.
- If you see cupping on the treads it

could be an alignment problem, tire balance, shock absorber, or a worn front-end part causing the problem.

- If you see the edges of the tire wearing out but the center of the treads is not wearing, the tire is under-inflated.
- If you see the center of the tread wearing out but the side treads are fine the tire is over-inflated.

Tire pressures should be checked at least once per week, and when you are checking pressures take a look at the wear patterns for any unusual wear. There are some people who claim that filling your tires with nitrogen will make them last longer by reducing wear caused by loss of air and inside tire deterioration. I find no benefit in filling your tires with Nitrogen if you keep tire pressures within specification. A tire will usually wear out long before it will deteriorate.

Dan Montegari is the president of Precision Diesel Service. Reprinted with permission of M&S Technical Services, Inc. from their newsletter, published by Precision Diesel Service. For more information, call Precision Diesel Service at 631-756-2020 or send an email to pds14@earthlink.net

Self-Sealing Tire Tech

Goodyear has adapted its self-sealing commercial tire technology on a broader scale for use on long-haul and mixed-service trucks. The new Unisteel G316 LHT line-haul trailer tire featuring DuraSeal Technology allows trucks to continue operating after a tire is punctured by road debris up to 1/2-inch diameter in the repairable tread area.

The technology uses a gel-like, solvent-free compound built into the inner liner of the tire. It instantly seals punctures with gel flowing into void areas and around objects less than 1/2-inch in diameter. DuraSeal in the G316 LHT helps reduce fleet downtime and service calls, lowers a company's cost of operation, and enhances retreadability.

In addition to long-haul trucks, the tire is suitable for mixed-service trucks that travel on- and off-road as well as recreational vehicles, buses, and towable trailers. The tire features an all-steel four-belt package that provides a good foundation for multiple retreads. For more information, see <http://www.goodyear.com/cfm/web/truck/line.cfm?prodline=160418>

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RECOVERY NOTES

Bill's Big Job

*But he made eight mistakes.
Can you identify them?*

By Bill Jackson

I thought it would be useful for you to read about some of the really ridiculous things I have seen occur in towing and recovery, hoping you will never do the same. Rather than just list all the things that could go wrong, I have created a made-up tanker recovery call and described what the operator did.

The challenge is for you to work out the mistakes he made and compare your sharp eyes with the list I've made that you will find in the sidebar at the end of this article. And no fair looking!

Let's call our owner/driver "Bill" and see what Bill does (or does not do) on this job. The numbers in parentheses below correlate with the numbered answers I give in the sidebar. See if you can identify all eight errors.

On The Way

It was a freezing night (isn't it always?). The call out came from the highway patrol HQ to recover a tanker that had rolled down a bank at about mile marker 102 on I-91. Bill told them that he knew it well and would be there in about an hour (1). He knew that his driver was nearly back from another heavy job and all the equipment needed would be on board.

A bit later, Bill jumped in his mighty Western Star and roared off into the night. He had already decided that he would handle this one himself as he had the most experience, but he did recall that his top driver had attended instruction on "tanker recovery" some time ago and passed with top grades (2).

Driving along, he gave no thought to the problems he faced as he had done several tanker recoveries, but he did

*"Bill was up
to his knees
in the water"*

feel a bit uncomfortable now as one or two of them had not gone very well (3). After all, he reasoned, tankers, no matter what they carried, were really just tankers and he knew how to recover them.

Bill recalled that way back he had done a similar callout at what he presumed to be the same location. For that reason, he knew he should approach the job from the north as the incident was reported to have been caused by a southbound vehicle going "off-road." (4)

At The Scene

On arrival at the scene, Bill pulled his truck off the road on the soft shoulder where he figured he would be lifting and winching from. Then he went to find the highest-ranking officer in charge to tell him he was on site and ready (5).

After a few words with him, he heard the news he didn't want to hear. The scene commander said they had called for a pump-off tanker. This meant Bill had to wait several hours for that truck to arrive.

That's when he realized he could have gotten this information before he left. So he sat in his nice warm cab and

took a break until the pumper arrived (6). Then he emerged to start the recovery

He threw a couple of chains and two snatch blocks down the bank, then two polyester straps and an assortment of air cushions. He slid the entire lot down the bank.

That's when Bill made his first trip down to the tanker. When he got to it, he was alarmed to find it sitting in two feet of water (7).

The Recovery

Quite a long time passed. Bill was up to his knees in the water and was wor-

rying about snakes while he tried to get the straps underneath the tanker. He later managed to run a double line from each winch and hook them up to the tanker (8).

He began the pull and the suction caused the now-empty tanker to come up the bank sideways. Bill just kept pulling until it finally came over the top on its side. After a bit of juggling by Bill with his hydraulic big boom, the tanker finally sat on the roadside ready for a tow.

Now what did Bill do wrong? Got your answers? Now check the sidebar for my eight responses to Bill's actions to see if we agree. 🐍

What Bill Bungled

I know this job would never be handled like this by you, but see if you have noted correctly all the errors Bill made. Here are my eight answers:

(1) Bill should never have promised an arrival time if he did not actually have a possible start time in mind.

Better to have jumped in a pick-up and gone out to the scene to check it out. This is what gives a company a bad name with the cops.

(2) It would have been far better to have contacted his top driver and rerouted him to join him at the scene. Those who have the latest training information are most likely to be the most important factor in a tanker recovery.

(3) Tankers carry a wide range of liquids these days, many of which may kill or maim you and others. Most tanker recoveries will be different in some way.

Bill once nearly killed a bystander on an earlier job when he asked a watcher to hold a piece of safety tape at a tanker recovery, only to have a stone get into a snatch block and explode. Later on, they were still digging bits of flint out of the poor spectator.

(4) Right from the start of this job, it was doomed because Bill never got enough info on which to base his course of action. He forgot the recoveryman's mantra of key questions:

- Whose is it?
- What is it?
- Where is it?
- Which way was it traveling when it went off?
- How is it? (wheels on/off, pump-

out required, etc.)

- When did it happen?

(5) Completely wrong! He should have parked his truck out of the way to protect any medics and other responders working there until he had done his walk-around, after which he could advise how he might wish to bring the tanker up the bank.

(6) It often takes so long to get the pump-off tanker on-site, he could have returned to base or used the time to do his walk-around.

This latter activity has always been the most important act any operator can do at any large incident.

(7) Of course, you never throw anything anywhere at a recovery, but if he had done his inspection he would have known that air cushions are useless in water unless they can be restrained, which was clearly impossible in this job.

(8) Because the tanker was now empty, clearly the best thing to do was make his boom as long as possible to get the best lift and winch-in line-up, and then roll the tanker onto its wheels for easier hauling.

He should know that the boom would be at its weakest point, so the manufacturer's maximum loads at this angle must be obeyed.

I know it all looks so elementary, but in my lifetime I have seen all these and many more mistakes made.

Bill, of course, does not actually exist but if what he did fits you on any one or more of the eight items, it's time to take another look at your operation!

— Bill Jackson



This is no place to make a mistake



"Your Fee Is Too High!"

Them's fighting words to a busy recovery man....

By Allan T. Duffin

....but face it: The fact that someone is questioning the amount of your invoice for that big job could be at least partly your fault. In these difficult economic times, properly and effectively billing a customer for a recovery job is more important than ever. "I see many towers cutting prices," said Earl Mumma, president of Highspire Auto & Truck Repair Corporation in Steelton, PA. "Remember when you hook up, your company is on the line — and maybe your home and future," urged Mumma. "Be careful!"

Also working to give their customers good service and — one hopes — fair billing are trucking road service companies — truck "motor clubs" of sorts — that centralize the business by serving as a one-stop shop for towing and maintenance needs for truck and vehicle fleets.

But the growth of these companies has caused heated debate in the towing community. What are the most effective ways to bill customers? Are the trucking road service companies playing fair with towers? And are they helping or hurting the industry by consolidating so many towing businesses under one umbrella?

Reviewing Bills

Organizations like the American Towing Alliance (ATA) have created nationwide networks of towing companies whose efforts are coordinated through a central location. ATA's operations, for example, are based out of its corporate office in Upland, CA. The company was formed in 2001 and was endorsed by the American Trucking Association in 2004 when the membership expressed concern that some heavy-duty towing companies were allegedly overbilling truckers.

ATA President and COO Chris Carlson, a former aerospace engineer and operations consultant, founded ATA with two Southern California heavy towers, including Danny Meister, a 30-year industry veteran and owner of Freddie Mac's Towing in South El Monte, CA. "We saw a need to bring the best heavy towers together to serve Class 8 fleets on a nationwide basis," explained Carlson.

At Cherryville, NC-based FleetNet America, clients have two options when calling for breakdown response or maintenance needs. The first is to have FleetNet locate a towing vendor for the customer to use. Once the job is complete, the vendor charges the customer directly. "In this case we do not have any say when it comes to the bill because we never see it," explained Nathan Jaynes, director of information technology for FleetNet.

The second option — and the more popular by far — involves the customer asking FleetNet to take care of



A heavy-duty at work from ATA co-founder Danny Meister's company, Freddie Mac's, South El Monte, CA

everything — setting up the job, following up with the vendor, and paying for the work. In this case, noted Jaynes, FleetNet audits the billing and pays the tow vendor directly.

In addition to coordinating heavy-duty towing for its members, said ATA's Carlson, "Insurance companies and claims adjusters turn to ATA to help mediate invoices following non-consensual recoveries — ensuring that invoices are fair and that recovery specialists are paid in a timely manner."

Carlson noted that in addition to performing mediation on behalf of its trucking and insurance clients, ATA also works with its network towers when they are having a difficult time getting paid on a non-consensual recovery.

Fast Response

Located in South Bend, Ind., CDI Services, Inc., works with fleet maintenance providers who have 1,000 or more vehicles, as well as transportation fleets or companies that operate at least one truck. According to Dana McFletcher, director of operations and sales, CDI's business units include emergency road service, fleet maintenance, a truck dealership, truck loading operations, truck driver training programs, and employee payroll services.

CDI's client list consists of nearly 300 trucking, leasing, and fleet maintenance companies like Mayflower, Gilster Mary Lee Corporation, Frito Lay, United Van Lines, and Highland Transport. When a truck breaks down, the driver calls CDI. The company then sets up a repair or towing job with one of its 60,000 contracted vendors. CDI handles nearly 5,000 customer calls each month, said McFletcher.

"We act as an extension to the customer's maintenance department in response to over-the-road emergencies and supply breakdown reports detailing the incident," explained

McFletcher. When a customer or driver reports a breakdown, CDI locates and sets up the vendor response, tracks the breakdown progress until the job is complete, and issues payment to the vendor when billing information is available. "Purchase order is our preferred method," said McFletcher, "however we are also capable of making comcheck and credit card payments." During the repair or towing operation, the company provides Internet access to real-time information and reports.

What are the advantages of joining a road service firm? According to Jaynes, "We're a single place you can call for a breakdown event, and we have vendor coverage in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico." Jaynes pointed to fast response time as another plus when working with companies like FleetNet. "For the events that we did last year," he said, "our average time from receiving the call about a breakdown to the time that the vehicle was rolling again was just over two hours."

Jaynes also noted that the services provided by road service companies like FleetNet can be wide-ranging: "For some customers we handle 100 per-

cent of their breakdown services," he said, "and for some we handle nights and weekends when their dispatchers are not available. We are very flexible in the services that we provide."

Oversight Questions

But the establishment of companies like ATA, CDI Services, and FleetNet has caused a lot of grumbling in the towing community regarding the oversight of billing procedures — one of the services that the road service firms provide to their members. Earl Mumma of Highspire Auto & Truck Repair isn't necessarily a fan of the practice. "I feel they make a huge amount of money for a telephone call and then sometimes want to hassle the bill down," he explains.

"Personally I think they're doing more harm than good, but unfortunately so are some towers," said Bob Berry of Berry Brothers Towing in Oakland, CA. Towers who do a sub-standard job can make the already-heated situation even more difficult. "Unfortunately, sometimes we give them all the ammo they need to do what they're doing and get sympathy from the public and from those who don't understand our industry," he explained.

While Berry agreed that there needs to be some mediation available in the industry, he said one problem with road service companies is that their mediators are not always fully knowledgeable about towing equipment or techniques. "I've known a number of towers who have dealt with them on bills," explained Berry. "Sometimes they've delayed payments and run bills up for customers unnecessarily."

In addition, said Berry, not being on the scene can lead to misunderstanding and incorrect information being used in the mediation process. "Unless they come out and take a look — unless they were there at a particular time, and were given the same instructions by the police department or the trucking company," — it can be difficult to negotiate a final bill, Berry explained.

For their part, the roadside service firms are concerned about protecting their members from being overcharged. "We've seen an increase in vendor rates

See "YOUR FEE IS TOO HIGH!", page 26

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"YOUR FEE IS TOO HIGH!"

continued from page 25

nationwide," noted Dana McFletcher of CDI Services. "This in turn has caused an increase in customer complaints regarding costs being too high."

One of the services that CDI provides for its members is to obtain estimates up front. "This is very helpful in avoiding or resolving disputes after the work is complete," explained McFletcher. To ensure that its customers are receiving "fair vendor pricing by passing through the cost as is," she said, CDI bills its customer the actual vendor cost and taxes without invoice markups.

The Rate Debate

Nevertheless, some towers continue to view road service companies as a hindrance to getting the job done. "Big trucking companies and owners of fleets and organizations have set up these 'auto clubs' so they can run the price down on our work," claimed Berry.

Most of the time, if a tower has set a fair, customary rate, he or she will receive very few complaints, he said. "Unfortunately some towers double and triple their hourly rate unnecessarily."

Road service companies, added Berry, sometimes fall into the same pattern: "They want to make 15, 20, or 25 percent off the job. They get paid right away." But the tower has to wait for payment. "Sometimes [road service companies] don't pay until 30, 60, or 90 days later," he said.

The solution? Towers as well as road service companies need to make sure that rates are fair and that payment is immediate. "We can be our own worst enemy," Berry explained. "If we want to solve our problems, we need to be as fair as possible."



Dana McFletcher: Dana McFletcher, Director, Operations and Sales, CDI Services

Carlson noted that ATA is striving to work with towers to boost the industry's public image and the overall quality of work. "By and large the heavy towing industry is made up of solid business men and women who are working hard in dangerous conditions to keep our roadways moving," he said. "However, when we first came on the scene nine years ago, there were a number of towing companies that were utilizing abusive billing practices and were really hurting the image of the industry."

To support its trucking clients and to improve the image of towers as a whole, said Carlson, ATA "aggressively battled companies that systematically preyed on the trucking industry."

Carlson admitted that ATA's tough approach might have rubbed a number of towers the wrong way from time to time. But he added that such disagreements are sometimes necessary in trying to negotiate the best possible deals for clients. "We took a lot of heat

for this, but stayed the course because we knew that it was the right thing to do," explained Carlson.

During the last several years ATA has moderated its approach and acts more as a mediator between towers and clients — both fleets and insurance companies — "to arrive at a bill that is fair," Carlson said.

Better Billing

When preparing a final bill, how can towers better assist their customers and, by extension, improve their relationships with road service companies? The solution involves more than just creating careful documentation of the incident response. Also important, said Berry, is to establish a reasonable hourly rate. "Trucks come in different sizes, and may or may not be needed for a particular recovery job," he explained.

Mumma agreed: "It is better to have an understanding of price before the job starts; then there is no room for confusion," he said. "With technology today, on a recovery situation, pictures of the recovery should be e-mailed to the company and a rough estimate given before starting the job."

Towers should get paid as quickly as possible, said Mumma. Be careful to check out the company prior to accepting a purchase order or accepting comcheck cards, he added. "It is better to get paid when the job is done — before you leave the scene or tow job," he said. "Make sure your purchase order from any third-party vendor has an agreed amount."

Mumma knows some third parties like to call and negotiate the bill down after the job is done. "I would recommend all towers make all vendors sign a credit application so the customer understands their terms," he added. "With the economy today, even big companies are trying to delay payments and this equates to interest-free loans for them."

If a truck arrives on-scene but isn't specifically used for the recovery operation, it's important to take this into consideration when compiling a bill. "You need to come up with a figure for hand laborers who are, for example, unloading the trailer or helping with setting airbags," said Berry. "If those

workers happen to drive up in a tow truck that isn't used at the scene, you don't need to charge for the truck. It was used as a mode of transportation — they could have arrived in an automobile instead."

Berry noted that inexperience sometimes leads to billing issues. "Sometimes there are jobs that a tower hasn't done before," he explained, "and therefore things don't go as smoothly as if they had already done that job four or five times." When preparing a bill, he added, people should take into account any learning curve "so the customer isn't impacted by somebody's inexperience."

Keeping Track

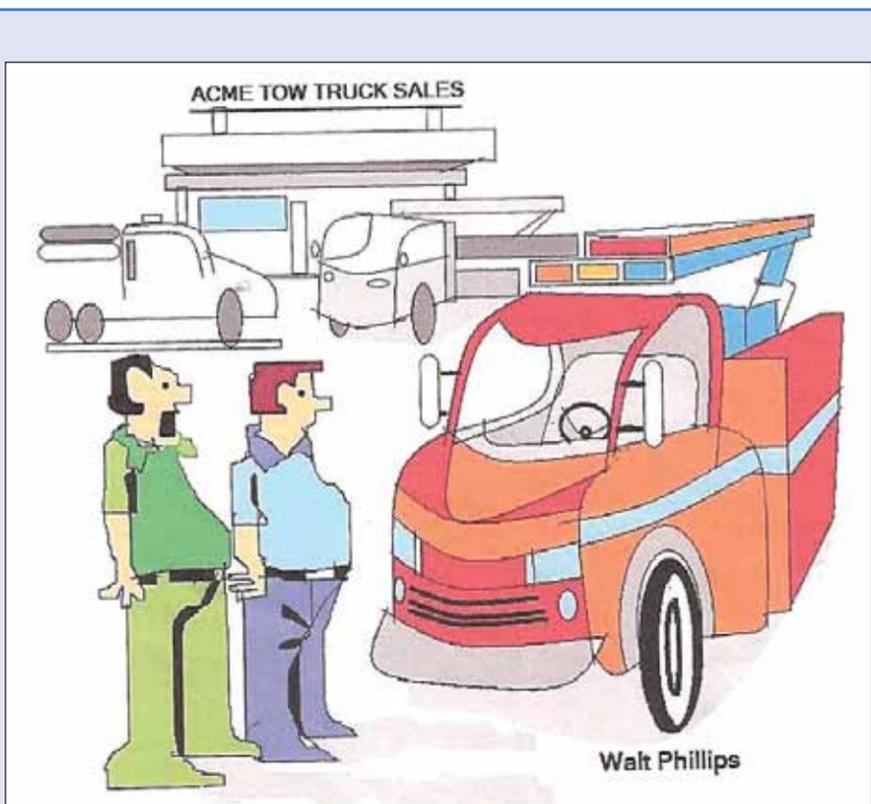
The road service companies note that they carefully track their vendors' performance. "We do scrutinize the billing practices of our vendors," said Jaynes. "We hold them accountable for what they are charging for." In fact, said Jaynes, FleetNet cross-checks its vendors' rates and mileage against comparable towing firms to prevent price gouging.

To provide solid service to its members, ATA created a tower advisory group, or TAG, to assist with the company's policy and business decisions. "Our TAG group, consisting of 12 to 18 of what we believe to be the most solid companies in the nation, have been meeting with ATA staff on a regular basis," said Carlson. "The group helps us grow the business and ensure that we are doing everything that we can to improve the quality and image of heavy towing across the nation." He noted also that ATA works with highway oversight groups to ensure that they are considering the role of the heavy tower when developing policies for programs like quick clearance.

Empathy can go a long way toward resolving disagreements over a bill. Berry urged towers to look at the job from the customer's point of view. "Before you give a bill to the owner of a truck or car or bobtail — whatever you're working on — look at it from the other side," he said. "Ask yourself, 'Is this a fair bill for the work that was done?' Stand on the other side of the table and look at the bill. Would you think it's fair? If you think it is, then stick to your guns and collect the money you're owed."

The road service companies are well aware that their business rises and falls according to how they treat their customers. The companies build their networks of vendors by some of the same methods that local towers use to reach new customers. "We've built up over time using OEM listings, truck stops, referrals and the like," explained McFletcher. The quality of CDI's vendors is tracked using a rating system based on service, price, response time, and billing practices.

"With truck freight dropping by record levels of 35 to 40 percent," said Carlson, "our company doubled our sales staff to attract more fleets to use our services." Additionally, he said, ATA is working on strategic partnerships designed to bring more tow volume to its network while better serving the company's trucking clients.



Walt Phillips

"It has the latest GPS – guaranteed to get you to a fender bender before the lawyers arrive!"

Attitude Counts

Towers and road service companies agree that attitude is paramount in negotiating a final bill. "You have to be very sure that you're doing the right thing and charging the right rate," said Berry. "Otherwise it will come across when you're talking to people, and you won't project what you need to in order to support that bill."

Sometimes tow truck drivers can be defensive, said Berry — which can work against them when dealing with an insurance company, a road service firm, "or the guy standing on the other side of the desk, trying to get his car back."

Whether or not towers are happy with the growth of the road service companies, said Earl Mumma, it's something that is growing and changing the traditional way of doing business. "This is a change the towing industry has to adapt to," he said.

"I would like to think that we have done an effective job in connecting the best trucking companies with the best

towers," said Chris Carlson of ATA. "I do believe that with our active participation in both trucking and towing associations that we have helped to bridge the gap between the two industries. I also believe that because of our relationships with trucking associations and highway commissions that we are impacting how our roadways will be quickly and safely cleared in the future."

"I've been doing this 36 years," said Bob Berry. "You learn to do the job a little bit better every day. You need to do things better every day and try to be as fair as possible." Berry reiterated his "golden rule" about billing: Try to see things from the customer's point of view. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," he said. "It's an old rule, but it works."

Regardless of how towers view their billing practices and the role of the new road service companies, Carlson urged everyone to work together to find the best ways to bill their customers. ❖

Better Billing

How to get your fees faster

If you're concerned about someone getting a negative impression of your billing practices, you can protect yourself to a great extent by making sure that your documentation is complete, clear and concise. "It's all in the write-up of the incident," says Kevin Farthing, owner of Waffco Heavy Duty Towing & Recovery in Lake Station, Indiana.

To help with their paperwork, Farthing and his staff use a software package called Tracker Enterprise, produced by Tracker Management Systems of Cleveland, Ohio. The company works with towing firms to improve their dispatch capability, impound and storage lot management, GPS tracking of vehicle fleets, and office automation needs. For preparing solid documentation, the Tracker Enterprise software "has awesome noteboxes and also a great itemization page for billing," noted Farthing.

In addition to using computer-based tracking systems, Farthing has a few tips for his fellow towers that will make the invoicing process — and any disagreements that arise from it — resolve much more smoothly:

Document what happened immediately following the job. "When we come back from an incident, regardless of the size, the person who supervised the job sits down and writes a rather lengthy note of the scenario," explained Farthing.

This information includes what the team found upon arrival, what type of equipment was used on the job, how much damage was done to the vehicle or vehicles involved in the incident, and the tower's general opinion of the crash — speed on a curve, snow or ice on the road, and other key issues.

Use decimal places in your numbers. Farthing avoids rounding any numbers in his invoices. "For example, if I charge \$150 per hour for a piece of equipment and I use it for 1.06 hours, the total charge will be \$159," said Farthing. "I don't round the hour up or down." Farthing has seen some invoices from other companies that do round the dollar amount. "This always looks to me to be pulled from thin air," he said.

The Tracker computer software allows all times to be documented, he added, "since you are rarely out working an even number of hours." For example, if Farthing starts a job at

8:11 and finishes at 9:33, he enters those exact times into the software program rather than rounding the job to something like 90 minutes.

Be as precise as possible. To avoid long arguments over why you billed for a particular service, carefully write down exactly what you accomplished. "If the average tow operator would look at his paperwork like he does when he gets an itemization invoice from the dealership for repairs to his truck, he would do better with his invoicing," he said.

Start taking photos when you arrive on-scene. The still or video camera has proven to be a powerful tool for documenting what occurred at an accident scene. Farthing highly recommends that towers take photos and video whenever possible: "Always have first-arrival pictures, and have a time and date stamp on the photos. This helps to back up the invoicing."

He suggested that towers walk back up the road "and get a long shot of the road, ramp, ditch — whatever was the precursor to the accident." If cargo was involved, take lots of photographs to document the scene.

Video can be helpful as well. You don't have to use an expensive video camera — just one that can help you obtain clear visual evidence of what happened during the recovery job. Farthing said, "We video some jobs during the hardest or longest part of the recovery to show the amount of labor, equipment, conditions and where the equipment went."

Remember that it's all in the approach. "As they say, attitude determines altitude," said Farthing. "I've heard more than one tow operator tell a customer, 'That's the price, and if you don't like it, I'll see you in court!' Well, you know what? Some companies have teams of lawyers and insurance companies that will make you regret your bravado and attitude."

If a customer questions you, he said, don't take offense. "They're just like us — they're trying to justify the bills." See if there's something you can do to improve the transaction. Farthing sometimes slashes a few days off storage fees, lets the customer comcheck him for payment, or allows the customer to come in at his or her leisure to move out any salvage items. "Try to make a new customer, not a new enemy," he urged.

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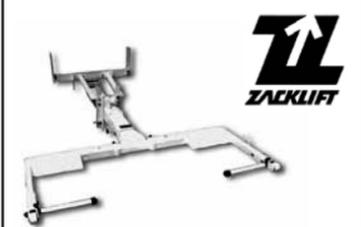
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2002 Chevy 6500, CAT 210, Allison Auto, 132K Miles, Nice Shape, Loaded, Alum. Wheels, A/C, P/W, P/D, Heated Mirrors, 19.5 Tires, (2) 40 Gallon Tanks, Chevron Series 14 Two car Carrier and 4,000 LB wheel lift, 22" Deck, 14,000 LB Deck Capacity, All Lighting and Options. Special Pricing ask Jr. for Code 22.

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04 F-550, 6.0 DSL, Auto, XLT, 141K, (SUPER CLEAN), Chevron 19' Aluminum 2 Car Carrier, R/BRDS, Stainless 1/4 Fenders, All Lighting and Options, extended cab

1690c White 06' Frlnr M2, merc. 210 h/p, automatic, loaded, 19.5 rubber, Chevron 21.5' aluminum, r/rails, (6) add'l key slots, all lighting and options.

INTEGRATED WHEEL LIFT
99 INT'L 4700, Diesel, Auto, 119K mi, Runs Like A Top, Integrated 10-Ton Wrecker, Single Line Extendable Boom, L-Arms, Frame Forks, New Paint & Lighting, In-Cab Controls, Simulators.

NICE TRUCK
02 CHEVY C-6500 DIESEL, Auto, Rubber Good, Alum. Wheels, H/d mirrors, (2) 40 Gallon tanks, Chevron 20' S-10 Steel, 2 car carrier, 10,000 LB. Deck Capacity, 3,000 LB wheel lift capacity, Diamond Deck, Removable rails, (2) 49" H/D Aluminum Boxes, All Lighting and Options! Special Pricing ask Jr. for Code 20.

21' VULCAN STATIONARY PYLON
02 INT'L 4300 WHT, DT-466, 230HP, Auto, 230K, (Lower Half RBLT. By INT'L), Loaded, Rubber 50%, Vulcan Steel 2 Car Carrier and Wheel Lift, Diamon Deck, R/Rails, (2) 32" Boxes, All Lighting and Options.

4X4 FORD CARRIER
05 F-550, 6.0 DSL, Auto, XLT, 110K, (LIKE NEW), Century 19' Aluminum 2 Car Carrier, (2) 49" Boxes, L.E.D. Light Bar, Vulcan, Receivers and Scoop L-Arm

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#1311 New Red 2007 Frlnr M2, air brks/prk, air ride, merc. 210 h/p, auto trans, exst brk, loaded, **Chevron Aluminum 21.5' blade aluminum rails, air free wheel, All lighting and options.**

#1377 New White 2008 F-350 extended cab pick-up, diesel, automatic, loaded **NEW Dynamic Snatcher** integrated Auto Load Ship-in Wheel lift.

#1360 New White 2007 Frlnr M2, air brks/prk, air ride, merc. 210 h/p, auto trans, exhaust brake, **aluminum Wheels**, loaded, **Chevron Aluminum 21.5' blade aluminum rails, air free wheel, All lighting and options.**

#1342 New Red 2008 F-550, 6.4 diesel, automatic, XLT, loaded, **Chevron 408 tva** twin line integrated Wrecker and **AutoGrip, Stainless Steel Body** all lighting and options.

#1359 New White 2007 Frlnr M2, air brks/prk, air ride, merc. 210 h/p, auto trans, exhaust brake, **aluminum Wheels**, loaded, **Chevron Steel 21.5', r/rails, air free wheel, All lighting and options.**

EXTENDED CAB 4X4 CHASSIS
1384C 08 Ford 450 Extended Cab 4x4 Chassis, 6.4 Diesel, A/C, Tilt, AM/FM, Steps, 60" C/A, \$ 32,500

New 06 Red Chevy 5500, Auto, Duramax 300 H/P Loaded, Chevron 21' Steel 2 Car Carrier with Wheel Lift, All Lighting and Options. \$ 57,500

97 FORD F450 XLT, 7.3 Diesel, 84" C/A, 5 SPD, 8-ton Alum. Body w/Twin 10K Winches, 4,000 lb. Wheel Lift, Double Doors Each Side, All Lighting & Options, Red, All New Injectors.

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EXTENDED CAB FORD 650
04 WHITE F-650, XLT, 230HP Cummins, Automatic, Loaded, 150k, Chevron 21.5' Aluminum 2-Car Carrier, Removable Rails, All Lighting & Options.

#1373 New White 2008 k/w T-270, 260 h/p, shift by wire automatic, loaded, **aluminum Wheels Chevron S-14 Steel 21.5', aluminum Blade rails, air free wheel add'l key cuts, all lighting and options.**

Red 97 F-450, 7.3 dsl, 5 spd., xl, a/c, p/w, 84" c/a aluminum twin line wrecker and 4,000lb. wheel lift. 10K winches, all lighting and options.

#1366 New White 2008 int'l 4400 Maxforce 285 h/p, auto, 33,000 g.v.w., 136" c/a, loaded, **aluminum Wheels Chevron 1016 twin line integrated aluminum body 16 ton wrecker 12,000 lb. Underlift, 15,000 lb. Dp planetary winches**, all lighting and options.

Black 1996 Int'l 4700, T-4 175 h/p dsl, 5 spd., a/c, p/w, 61,000 miles, Challenger 10 ton twin line wrecker & 6,000 lb. wheel lift, all lighting and options.

#1370 New White 2007 Frlnr M2, air brks/prk, air ride, merc. 210 h/p, auto trans, exst brk, loaded **Chevron Aluminum 21.5' blade aluminum rails, air free wheel, All lighting and options.**

#1367 White 2008 int'l 4300 Maxforce, 225 h/p, automatic MAX-FORCE 245 h/p, loaded, Air brakes, 108" c/a, **Chevron 512** twin line 12 ton Wrecker and 8,000 lb. underlift. All lighting and options.

09 White Int'l 4300, Maxforce, 230 h/p, auto, loaded, 19.5 tires, Chevron 21' steel S-10, stationary pylon all lighting and options.

1671c Black 2003 k/w T-300, cat 250 h/p, 6 spd, a/c, pwr/pass. Side window, pwr mirrors, tilt wheel, **aluminum Wheels, Jerrdan 21' steel** removable aluminum rails, L.e.d.s, all lighting and options, 24,691 miles.

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2008 Ford F450, SUPER CAB, black loaded chassis, auto, diesel, Vulcan 810 Intruder (vin 6833) \$59,950

NEW Ford 550 Units

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2007 Chev C6500, White, Auto, Duramax diesel, GWV 26,000, 21' Vulcan Steel, removable rails (vin 3227) \$67,950

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2008 Dodge Ram 5500, Black, Auto, Vulcan 810 auto loader (vin 5664) \$63,950

2008 Dodge Ram 5500, auto, white loaded chassis, 84CA (vin5510) ready to build

2009 Dodge Ram 5500, auto, white loaded chassis, 19.6' Century Aluminum RR (vin545) \$65,865

2009 Dodge Ram 5500, auto, black loaded chassis, 60CA (vin 5555) ready to build

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#3507 2007 CHEVY 5500 DURAMAX, Allison Auto, Vulcan 21' Steel carrier, W/L, 3-48" steel boxes, 1/4 fenders, PL,PW Heated mirror, Wheel sims	#5824 2007 FORD F-450 XLT, Diesel, Auto, Century 312 Autoload, Aluminum body, Twin line, Extendable boom, 84" CA, Tow sling, (42,000 miles)
	
#0105 2005 CHEVY 5500 DURAMAX diesel, Allison Auto,Exh brake, T/C, Vulcan 21' Steel carrier, R/R, 4-48" S/S door boxes	#8975 2003 FORD F-550XLT SC 4X4, Diesel, Auto, Vulcan 882 S/S body, 60" CA, Running boards, Wheel simulators, Jet stream light bar
	
#0236 2009 HINO 258ALP Diesel, Auto, AB,AR, Alum wheel, Vulcan 21' S, R/R, W/L, Galv sub frame	#0521 (2) 99/00 LANDOLL 660 53' TRAVELING AXLE TRAILERS, 20K winch, Container kit, Fork lift Pkg, Need paint make nice trailers

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New 20,000lb & 40,000lb NRC rollback beds with wheel lift. Call for price.

2008 Kenworth T800 Extended Cab, 18 Speed Trans, 485 Cummins Motor, NRC 40 CS, 50,000lb Under Reach, Tunnel Tool Box, Light pylon with Beacon, Winch covers, Stainless Steel Package.

1997 International 4700, T444E, 5 Speed, A/C, Power Windows, Cruise, Tilt, Holmes 552 Twin Line Wrecker with Under Lift, Forks & L Arms.

07 PETE with a cat motor, 18 sp Trans with a 50/65 NRC, Sliding Rotator, 4 Winchs, 50K Axle List, 96" Towmar Lightbar.

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45 Ton Century

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Tri-Axle

1992 PETE 379 325" WB, 360-400 HP CENTURY 9055 45 TON, Detroit, jake brake, cruise, air ride, 411 rear ratio, front floatation tires, 85 MPH, 1997 Century 9055 50 ton planetary winches, 6 sets of forks, chain receivers and chains, spring hangers, Risers, corded remote, 6 receiver straps, 3 snatch blocks, strobe bar, 10 LED side lights, 11R 24.5 tires.



New 25 Ton Jerr-Dan

Cecil Wilson, broker
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2004 KW 900L New 2008 25 Ton Jerr-Dan HP550 cat, 18 speed, mileage 371,000 approx., rear ratio 355, 11x24.5 tires, all aluminum wheels, Dual stacks and breathers, 60" flat top sleeper w/rear window, 2008 25 ton Jerr-Dan, 8 function wireless remote, Bus bars w/ storage racks, 5th wheel with ball and Pental hitch attachments. Planetary winches, extra long Wheel lift, 330" WB.



New 08 Jerr-Dan 25 Ton

Cecil Wilson, broker
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2003 PETERBILT 379L New 2008 25 ton Jerrdan, 475 cat, jake, 13 speed, air ride, 355 rear ratio, 22.5 tires, all aluminum wheels, 571,000 mileage approx. 322" WB, factory built, 5th wheel, ball and pental hook up, Bus bars, extra long wheel lift w/storage brackets, wireless remote.



21 ft. Chevron

Cecil Wilson, broker
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2006 4300 INT. EXTENDED CAB, red in color, DT466, 6 speed, aluminum wheels, push bumper, milage approx 153,000 21 ft. Chevron steel w/Removal rails, wheel lift scoops, 4 tool boxes, southern truck no rust, gray vinyl interior.



35 Ton Challenger

Cecil Wilson, broker
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AC Cold/Price Reduced

1980 KW C50 CONSTRUCTOR 1988 35 ton Challenger, 350 cummins Overhauled 100K Miles Back, 10 speed, jake brake, AC color, 256" WB, heavy suspension, 24" big tires, Aluminum wheels, 3 stage boom, 3 stage underreach with forks.
Engine Overhauled 100,000 Miles Back!!



60 ton Challenger ROTATOR

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60 TON CHALLENGER ROTATOR 1988 FREIGHTLINER, 3406 - 425 cat engine, 13 speed, 60" flat top sleeper, stainless air deflector, jake engine brake, tri axle, virgin tires, front floats, rear camera, 16,000 lb front axle, 46,000 rears, 1990 60 ton Challenger ROTATOR, 2 stage boom, 2 stage rear out rigger, Total weight 69,000 lbs. Whelan strobe bar light w/wings, dual exhaust, side hyd front outriggers.



3 Stage Boom

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SLIDER

1993 KW T-800 60" flat top sleeper 40 Ton NRC Slider, 435 - 475 HP, 9 speed over, 38,000 rears, air ride, red and white color, 1999 NRC 40 ton slider, w/3 stage underlift, 80,000 lb tow rating, Whelan strobe bar light.
Southern Warehouse Truck



1998 25 Ton Aatac

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1987 KW T600 1998 25 TON AATAC, 350 cummins, BC Jakes, 9 speed OD, 60" sleeper, aluminum wheels, tires 90% approx, 278" WB, 142 CA, double framed, 170,000 miles approx on overhaul, mileage 1,096,000 approx, 1998 25 ton Aatac, forks, Chains, bus grids, 96" reach, 12,000 lb total extension.



25 Ton Challenger

Cecil Wilson, broker
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\$25,000

1978 GMC GENERAL 25 TON CHALLENGER 3 STAGE NRC LIFT, 425 HP, 8V92 Detroit, 9 speed, 1983 25 ton Challenger, 1994 35,000 lb 3 stage NRC lift, Red and white color.
CHEAP PRICE



3 Car

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2005 M-2 FREIGHTLINER CENTURY 3 CAR 30 FT., Caterpillar C 7, Allison automatic, 33,000 GVW, air brake, 3 seats, 224,105 miles approx. white color, Century 3 car, 30 ft w/Independent headboard, diamond floor, aluminum wheels.



50 Ton Kemp

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NEW 2009 50 TON KEMP MFG. Rescuer, 2 speed, Planetary, 50,000 lb, winches, 300 ft of 3/4" cable, free spooling, 2 - 15,000 lb side winches, 1/2" cable, air tensioner, air release, 3 stage under lift, 144", 120" useable reach 85,000 lb tow rating, 30 ft remote, hyd side legs, to stabilize side pulls, DOT lighting, 2 stage pump, 50 GPM 48" tunnel box, ca 173"



12 Ton Chevron

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Air Brake

2006 4300 IHC 12 TON CHEVRON, DT - 230 HP, 6 speed, extended cab, red color, air brake, 47,000 miles approx. Aluminum wheels 22.5, 2 - 55 gallon tanks, new tires, 2 tunnel boxes, air driver seat, 12 ton Chevron 12,000 lb winches, 6500 - 9000 wheel lift, truck tow bar.



35 Ton Challenger

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1987 FREIGHTLINER, 1981 35 Ton Challenger, 3 stage boom, Zac 30 102" reach, 425 HP cat, jake brake, 13 speed Transmission, 60" sleeper, AC cold, tires 22.5, doubled framed, air ride, WB 288", new white paint, wheel lift 2 stage, 30,000 lb lift.



25 Ton

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HOLMES 750, 25 ton wrecker only, squared extendable booms, winches and body in good condition, southern truck.



New 25 Ton Jerr-Dan

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2003 KW-T600 MID ROOF, NEW 25 TON JERR-DAN 12.7 Detroit, 430-470 HP, 10 speed, 545,000 miles approx, jake brake, 160 CA, 355 rear ratio, air ride, power windows, aluminum wheels 22.5 2 - 110 tanks, new 25 ton Jerrdan wireless remote, 8 functions, bus bars, forks, chain hook ups, spring hangers, 5th wheel and ball pental hook ups, extra long under reach, dual controls, trailer light bar and cord.



35 Ton Vulcan

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2004 PETERBILT, 475 HP CAT, 62" sleeper, mileage 685,000 approx., 10 speed, air ride, all aluminum wheels, White color, virgin tires 90% approx., 2008 W70 35 ton Vulcan, extra long under reach, bus bars, 6 sets of forks, Spring hangers, cord remote, aluminum body.



2005 25 Ton Jerr-Dan

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1999 KENWORTH W-900 2005 25 TON JERR-DAN, 3406 cat, 475 HP, 10 speed, new yellow paint, tires 90% approx., 52,000 GVW, mileage 708,000 approx. DOT inspected, 25 ton Jerrdan, HDL-500-280 model, radio remote, totally equipped including tool box, 45,000 miles approx. on new bed.



15,000lb Winches

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2000 6500 CHEVROLET 10 TON-9,000 LIFT HOLMES WRECKER, 149,000 miles approx., 3126 Cat 210 HP, 6 speed, new white paint, front tires new, rear 60% approx., Holmes 552 10 ton, 6500 - 9000 underreach lift, recent new cables, wheel lift cylinders rebuilt, truck tow bar, all new LED lights and simulators, AC cold, Microlock brake, push bumper, super clean inside and out.



Holmes 750 25 ton

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1977 FREIGHTLINER HOLMES 750 25 TON, 350 cummins, 13 speed w/4 speed brownie second transmission, 340,000 miles approx. Hendrickson suspension with timbre rubber locks, super cold AC, power steering, dual exhaust, double framed, All aluminum wheels, IIR-24.5 tires approx 50%, Holmes 750 25 ton extendable booms, Zac 20 97" reach, remote control, Bus bars, 4 sets of forks, spring hangers, 3 snatch blocks, jumper cables.



16 TON

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\$28,000

1996 KODIAK, 6 CYL CAT, 5 + 2 TRANSMISSION, AIR BRAKES, 25,950 GVW, MILEAGE 137,000 TIRES SIZE 295-75 R-22.5, TIRES 50%, 180" WB, 118 CA, 16 TON AATAC W/ 15,000 LB WINCHES, 7/16" CABLE, TRUCK TOW BAR, WHELAN STROBE, NEW 2 STAGE UNDER REACH, 3 SETS OF FORKS.



30 Ton

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Recent Engine Overhaul

1989 FLD FREIGHTLINER 94 CENTURY 5030T, 400 cummins, 15 speed, all aluminum wheels, white with gray, blue, and maroon stripes, 42 inch sleeper, 690,000 miles approx. 1994 Century 5030 T, 8 sets of forks, spring hangers, spade foot bads, chain hookups and Buss Bars.



15,000lb Winches

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1995 LANDOLL 317 48 FEET LONG, wood floor, tires 90% approx., new brakes and chambers, 3 new cylinders, 15,000 lb winch, 1/2" cable, 80 feet long, white in color.



21ft. Steel Jerr-Dan

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2006 335 PETERBILT, cummins engine, 8 speed, air ride & air brakes, aluminum wheels, 22.5 tires, white color Mileage 205,709 approx., 21 ft, steel Jerrdan diamond plate floor, aluminum blade side rails, Whelan strobe bar Light, 2 - 60" boxes. Removal Rails



1991 Century 20 Ton

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1984 INTERNATIONAL 9400 EAGLE 1991 CENTURY 20 TON, 400 cummins, BC, Jakes, 13 speed over, 36" sleeper, 33,000 GVW, tires 80% approx, 262 WB, new transmission in 2006, overhaul 150,000 miles back, current inspection, 1991 Century 20 ton, formula 3 lift, Double framed, 6000 lb L arms, 84" extension, 137 CA, 10,000 extended, forks, chains, truck tow bar.



25 Ton Vulcan

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1996 FRT 120, M-11 Cummins 330 HP, 10 Speed, eaten rears, 308 ratio, virgin tires 11-22.5, tires 6 aluminum wheels, air ride, 900,000 miles, overhauled 250,000 ago, W/2000 V-50 25 TON Vulcan, left hand controls, planetary 25,000 lb winches, back up spring hangers



Century 16 Ton

Cecil Wilson, broker
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PRICE REDUCED

1984 LTL 9000 FORD 1993 CENTURY 16 TON #3224, 400 Cummins engine w/jake, 13 speed, 560,000 miles approx, 2 air seats, 2 chrome stacks, Simulators, 33,000 GVW, 1992 - 2 16,000 lb winches 120 CA, 2 stage lift, 91" long, 12,000 extended, 2400 retracted, wire remote, 4 sets of forks, 6,000 lb grids, chain receivers and chains, steel body, mechanical Tilt, rotator light bar.



21ft. Steel Jerr-Dan

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NEW HOLMES DTU 5TH WHEEL WRECKER, sold but never used, ready for resale, 1 tool box, 20,000 lb winch, 3 sets of forks.



Price Reduced

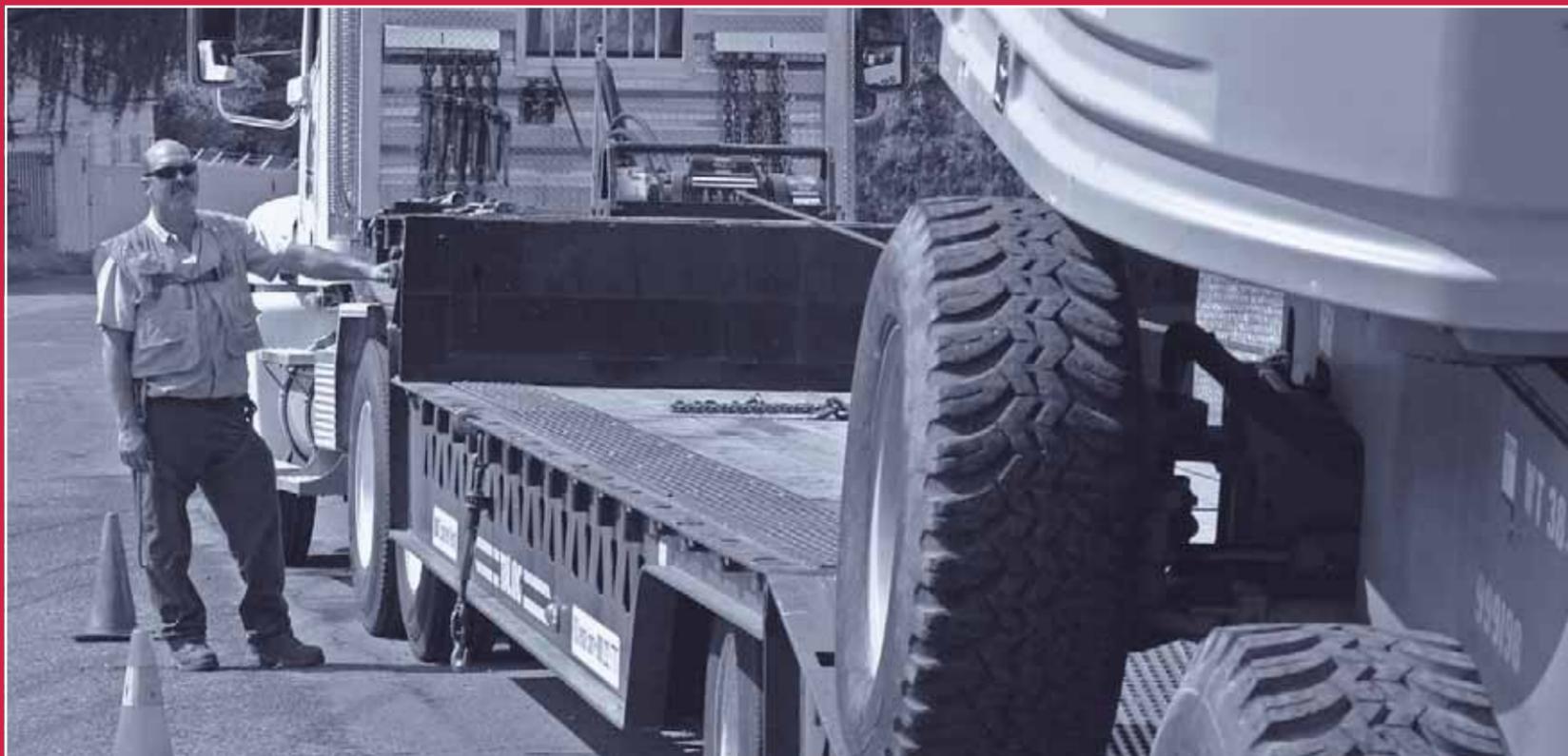
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New 2007 75 Ton Century Rotaor

NEW 2007 379 EXTENDED HOOD PETERBILT 75 TON CENTURY ROTATOR, 625 HP cat, 18 speed, factory spec truck, dual frame, triaxle, 372" wheelbase, 211" CA, 62" flat top sleeper, 11R 24.5 tires, 26,000 mileage approx., lite blue color, new century 75 ton rotator, 3 stage boom, 3 stage under reach 55,000 lb SDU -2 under reach, 135" reach, 3 - 50,000lb winches, 20" tunnel box.

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