

# TOWING & RECOVERY FOOTNOTES

A WHALE OF A TOW!  
pg. 14

October 2009

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## DANGEROUS, DEADLY, BIZARRE

*Towers should be aware of the worst that can happen*

By Allan T. Duffin and Cyndi Kight

In recent issues, Footnotes highlighted many safety issues involving the process of towing and recovery itself. In this article, we discuss those unexpected incidents caused by unpredictable reactions from customers and others that towers should be alert for to further protect themselves from injury or death on the job.

Towing companies do a lot of planning ahead — developing drivers' work schedules and training for safe and efficient recovery operations, for example. But sometimes a seemingly normal workday can be interrupted by unforeseen, even bizarre, circumstances that can be dangerous, or worse, when out on the road. And sometimes — despite hours of training and preparation — there's little or nothing a tower can do about it.

Often, such incidents arise because of a bad reaction on the part of the owner of a vehicle that is being tow-



Mitchell Martin, Mitchell's Towing, Vancouver, with son Greyson

ed or repoed, putting the tower in jeopardy. Tow truck drivers have been shot at, stabbed, set on fire, and had their

trucks vandalized. Some towers have even been murdered.

trucks vandalized. Some towers have even been murdered.

While these incidents are rare, they're worth looking at — if only to enhance awareness of what could hap-

pen on one of those days when something — or someone — goes haywire.

### DANGEROUS

Temper can flare when a vehicle is towed against the owner's wishes. In September 2008, a woman in Portland, OR, was so upset at the tower who was about to remove her illegally parked car that she refused to pay the \$150 release fee. Then she tried to set the tow truck on fire.

one-gallon gas can about two feet from the blaze," reported *The Oregonian* newspaper. In an attempt to avoid the police, the woman modified her hairstyle and changed her clothes, but her disguise didn't work and she ended up in jail later that day.

Even church parking lots aren't immune to bizarre incidents. Last summer a vehicle owner in Concord, NH, came upon a tow truck driver who was preparing to tow his car, which he'd left in a no-parking zone overnight. The vehicle owner came after the tow truck driver, the men fought and the tow truck driver was knocked off the bed of his truck. He landed on the pavement and fractured his skull.

### It's The Economy

While it's unfortunate — and shocking — that some vehicle owners get downright violent about seeing their property being carted away, some towers believe that the country's current economic problems are triggering even more frustration than usual.

After almost 1,200 vehicles were towed during bad weather in St. Paul, MN, one tower found the windows smashed on his only truck. "It had to be related to the snow emergency, because this truck has sat here for months, no damage to it," Clarence Kempke of CNS Services Towing told KAAL-TV. "They call a snow emergency and this is what I get. It's very frustrating. Now I have to spend excess money ... I'm going broke."

Several other tow truck drivers were attacked as they went about their duties. "We don't know if it has to do with the economy — people getting a little more upset when they have to pay

See DANGEROUS, DEADLY, BIZARRE, page 4

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## Towing & Recovery Footnotes CONTENTS

### FEATURES

- Bizarre & Deadly .....1  
Three Close Ones .....11  
What's The Word .....14

### SECTIONS

- Gear Mart .....12  
Short Hauls .....6  
Shows & Demos .....23  
Tow Truck Trader .....24

### COLUMNS

- Brainstormin .....3  
The Laugh List .....17  
On The Job .....21  
Tow Tales .....18  
Tow Tech .....9

# Brainstormin with stormin' norman

## Scamalot

*Don't fall for a truck lease  
that isn't a lease*

By Norman Horton

The economy is still kind of scraping the bottom, but you can't wait forever to replace equipment. Unfortunately when you run rolling stock (otherwise known as a wrecker, tow truck, or rollback), the odometer never seems to go backwards to "new." If anything, trucks seem to fall apart as they keep adding miles.

At my age nothing works like it did before. I feel like we ought to be evolving with age, but then again, I guess we are — right along with that equipment that's wearing out!

If you are like most tow truck owners, when it's time to get that shiny new tow truck or rollback, it requires a trip to a financial source, somebody with some money. The funding choices you have are of course banks, leasing companies (some with their own money, some which are brokers), friends and family, and the coffee pot buried in the back yard.

If you've paid any attention at all to the news, it seems that when money is hard to come by, you get all sorts of weirdos coming out of the woodwork. They promise you the sun, moon, stars, and easy money, but in reality they're looking for a way to relieve you of your cash rather than giving you a cash infusion.

Several times in the past I have warned about obtaining financing through unknown leasing companies, the ones that crawl up out of the woodwork and are constantly sending you phony credit cards available for

\$100,000 on a tow truck, or telephoning you with solicitations about why you should use them as your leasing source.

*"They're looking for  
a way to relieve you  
of your cash"*

### Where To Go

But when you are looking for money, where should you go? You should be able to trust your local bank, though that could be debatable now with all the bank failures going on. But that would be the first place to go for a loan. Your second effort could be to see if there are any motor club programs that you can tow for, and third, you can ask your tow truck dealer who they recommend.

A reputable tow truck dealer would not be interested in having you deal with some fly-by-night that's going to take advantage of you, and that's because they're depending on that leasing company to get their money. Also they don't want to recommend someone who will hoodwink you and then lose you as a customer. Some dealers

will even do a buy-here, pay-here for valued customers.

In reviewing a contract sent to a customer of mine by a leasing company — I'll call them XYZ Capital — that has ripped off towers across the country, my first impression was "What's the problem?" The document looked like any other lease contract, but in reality it was an invitation to apply that is designed to look like a contract. It had the normal boilerplate authorizations, the checklist that included a copy of your driver's license, your federal ID number, your insurance information, etc.

It also included this: "Please overnight the documents and advance check" to this leasing company. It then had a very reasonable monthly payment listed, a dollar buyout, a personal guarantee, and a place where you signed it. It all looked rather boilerplate and generic and looked like you would be signing a regular contract.

### Not So Final

Clauses one through nine were quite standard, but then there was number 10 where you as a tower agreed to provide XYZ Capital with all your financial statements, tax returns, bank statements, trade references, and any other credit information requested in order for them to make a *final credit determination*.

Whoa! I thought it was the final credit determination, a lease contract! That's what they had led towers all across the country to believe: that they were approved. However, what they tell you on the phone and what they have in writing are two different things, and it's what's in writing that counts if you ever go to court.

In the document, the tower agrees to submit full and accurate information, and then there's this: "This lease is subject to approval and acceptance by XYZ Capital and its assigns" — "assigns" means their bank — and "shall not be binding until accepted by XYZ Capital and its bank."

Here's the real kicker: When they receive your advance check along with your signed documents, this does not conclude and consummate the lease

See BRAINSTORMIN, page 5

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## Dangerous, Deadly, Bizarre

continued from page 1

that \$300 to get their car out," remarked a police spokesman.

Lack of money and the resulting stress can cause people to act in strange ways — even to the point of brandishing a weapon in front of a tow truck driver. Ed Pavel, vice president of the Illinois Recovery Association, told the *Chicago Tribune* that he'd seen an increase in the number of repo jobs since June 2008.

Each of those repossessions has the potential for triggering an altercation between towers and vehicle owners. "It cranks up the emotions of these people," said Pavel. "They're angry. And we're the ones who bear the brunt of their emotions when we come to their door."

### Guns & Knives

To protect themselves, some recovery operators are putting video cameras in their trucks. Case in point: Professional Recovery Services, based in Palatine, IL, tried to repo an SUV and a Cadillac from a home in Hoffman Estates, a suburb of Chicago. Instead, the three-person recovery team found themselves facing a man who was pointing a gun at them. The towers, who had already hooked the SUV to their truck, drove away. As they did, the man fired at them multiple times.

Fortunately none of the towers were hurt.

Disputes between vehicle owners and the towers who remove illegally parked vehicles came to a head last November in Bluffton, a small town



One of Martin's trucks

in southern Georgia. Preston Oates, the owner of Pro Tow, was about to move a vehicle out of a mobile home park when the people inside the nearby home came out and argued with him.

Then one of the people pulled a knife and stabbed Oates. "Oates said the knife went about 10 inches into his body, narrowly missing a kidney and other organs," reported the *Hilton Head Island Packet*. "He was taken to Memorial Health University Medical Center in Savannah, where he underwent surgery over the weekend."

It turned out that the residents were locked in a battle with the management of the mobile home park. The latter had taken an aggressive stance against vehicles "improperly parked on the streets and in front yards."

Already sheriff's deputies had to calm a protest down after approximately

15 vehicles were towed or booted. And Oates' company, Pro Tow, had generated its own share of controversy over its perceived aggressiveness at removing vehicles.

Oates had taken to carrying a gun to protect himself and had already been involved in an incident that summer where he shot at three men while attempting to repossess a vehicle. Oates reported that the three men advanced on him carrying a handgun, stick, and beer bottles. After the confrontation was over, police arrested Oates. His reaction to both incidents? "On July 16,

I defended myself and ended up in jail," Oates told a reporter. "On Friday, I didn't defend myself and ended up in the hospital. What am I supposed to do?"

### Shot & Hit

Unfortunately, sometimes the bullets fired by disgruntled people found their mark. "I felt the wind from the bullet come right by my head," said tow truck driver Jesse Vasquez of Phoenix, AZ. "He almost took me away from my kids." Vasquez had just been shot three times by an irate customer.

He had finished towing a young man's car after it was involved in an accident. While he was running the man's credit card, Vasquez glanced up and saw something shocking. "I looked in the mirror, in my rear view mirror, and he's pointing a gun right at me," said Vasquez. "He starts unloading and the second shot hits me."

The shooter hit Vasquez twice in the lower back and once in the lower leg. Neighbors came to Vasquez' aid as the shooter barricaded himself inside his house. He surrendered to police soon afterward.

Why did a customer who had turned over his credit card to pay for a \$154 tow suddenly pull a gun and fire at the tow truck driver? Vasquez wasn't sure. "He didn't give me any indication he was mad. If anything, he said he was

See DANGEROUS, DEADLY, BIZARRE, page 7

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**BRAINSTORMIN**

continued from page 3

agreement. To add insult to injury, they say that they will assume that any advance deposits you make "will be fully earned" by them.

**"Your money is gone, your deposit has been forfeited"**

Say what?! This means that just because they accept your money, if you fail to cooperate fully with XYZ Capital in a matter of disclosure, or if any of the information you submitted was misrepresented, or if there are any changes in your credit, or if your financial information was misleading or incomplete...then uh-oh! If you forget to fill out one little blank, more uh-oh. We earned our money - but you? Sorry, have a nice day.

**Through The Hoops**

If you cannot or will not furnish the documents they request or if you don't complete the agreement within 30 days...OK, did you get that? Despite the form's contract-like appearance, it's an application, not an agreement and not a lease.

So when you fail to jump through their hoops, this will result in a withdrawal of the application or any commitment on their part, and you as a tower have agreed that they won't be held responsible for any damages - meaning your money is gone, your deposit has been forfeited. Not only that, you are going to hold them harmless even though they just scammed you out of anywhere from three to five thousand dollars.

By the way, this expression of interest, which you thought was a contract, is not to be construed as one, and so you cannot consider the document a commitment until XYZ Capital has advised you, the tower, that they have completed their investigation.

Please, please be careful dealing with some of these clowns because they can tell you one thing and do another. Don't fall for this because they can write tight legal circles around their scam program.



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## SHORT HAULS

# Industry people, news, shows, awards, and more



Randy Olson, Vice President of Marketing for Miller Industries, discusses refacing of the International Towing and Recovery Hall of Fame and Museum with Board Chairman and Trustee George Connolly

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**New Face For Museum.** The International Towing and Recovery Hall of Fame and Museum in Chattanooga, TN, will be refaced, thanks to a donation from the Miller Family Foundation. The project will provide a more uniform and contemporary look to the museum that will better complement the Wall of the Fallen Memorial, which is located on the museum grounds. Completion was expected to be in time for September's 2009 Hall of Fame

induction and unveiling of the next set of names on the Wall of the Fallen. Visit [www.internationaltowingmuseum.org](http://www.internationaltowingmuseum.org)

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**Jerr-Dan Goes To Vietnam.** Jerr-Dan Corporation has announced that it has received an order for 14 vehicles — 12 Jerr-Dan HPL-3560 standard-duty wreckers and two Jerr-Dan MDL 320 medium-duty wreckers — from the Vietnam Ministry of Public Security, Police Department. The vehicles will be delivered and placed into service in Hanoi this fall.

**WreckMaster's New Century.** Miller Industries has furnished WreckMaster

with an International 4300 equipped with a CenturyR 2465 to be used in their training programs throughout the year. To learn more about WreckMaster's training program and schedules, visit [www.wreckmaster.com](http://www.wreckmaster.com)

The R 2465 is an integrated 12-ton towing and recovery unit that was recently introduced and includes hydraulic multi-position rear jacks, an aluminum modular body, and 12,000-pound planetary winches with a split hydraulic system for better power and performance. For more information

See **SHORT HAULS**, page 8

## Dangerous Distraction

A new study conducted by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute concludes that truckers who text while driving are 23 times more likely to crash or get into a near-wreck than an undistracted driver, while car drivers face the greatest danger when dialing their cell phones.

On July 29, a distracted New York tower in a flatbed truck crashed into a car carrying a woman and child, injuring them, and ended up in a backyard in-ground pool.

According to the *Niagara Gazette* story, "Rapids Fire Chief Barry Kobrin said a man identified as Nicholas Sparks, driving a tow truck for Adams Towing, was traveling east on Tonawanda Creek Road about 8 a.m. and was apparently talking on his cell phone and possibly sending a text message on another phone as he approached the intersection with Willow Wood Drive. A car was stopped there and waiting to turn left.

"The tow truck driver reportedly struck the back of the car, causing it to spin around and land in a ditch. The tow truck continued on, swerving off to the north side of the road and crashing through a backyard fence."

Researchers found the most shocking statistic to be the length of time that talking drivers' eyes were not on the road. For nearly five seconds out of a six-second window, drivers' eyes were averted from the roadway ahead of them and focused on their cell phone. Also, if a highway driver takes his eyes off the road for even 4.6 seconds, it equates to a traveling the length of a football field at 55 mph without ever looking at the road.

The researchers agreed that texting while driving should be banned. Indeed, they found "no redeeming factors associated with why a driver would be able to text and drive." The researchers hoped that these findings would help prompt legislation to ban not just texting while driving but the use of cell phones altogether.



Hullington Post

## WE... THE PROFESSIONALS

Book 3



by **BILL JACKSON**

## Bill's Recovery Book

In his *Brainstormin* column in the August issue, Norman Horton highly recommended Bill Jackson's third book of his classic recovery techniques. "Book 3: We... The Professionals" was published in 1983 and was, until recently, out of print. However, we are happy to report that Bill has reprinted a limited number of copies of Book 3 and will sell them for \$30 plus shipping on a first-come, first-served basis. If interested, please contact him at [billvid@comcast.net](mailto:billvid@comcast.net) or 561-622-5994 and order your copy now. As Bill said, "Even after all these years, there is still quite a demand for it."

**Dangerous, Deadly, Bizarre**  
continued from page 4

gonna pay the bill." The shooter's explanation was nothing short of bizarre: he told police that Vasquez was too slow and had stolen the keys to the vehicle. Even if it were true, why would the customer feel compelled to fire a hail of bullets at the tow truck driver?

**DEADLY**

Angry or disturbed people sometimes strike out against towers — like Jesse Vasquez — who were just trying to do their jobs. But sometimes the situation gets worse: sometimes towers are murdered on the job. The police have solved a number of these crimes; other cases still remain open.

On March 24th of this year, tower Jose Fernandez moved through the parking lot of The Outpost, a 20-acre complex of student apartments in San Antonio, TX. He was checking to make sure that the vehicles displayed the required parking permits.

Sometime before three a.m., someone shot Fernandez four times — "including in the back of the head, chest, and legs," reported local TV sta-

**"The shooter's explanation was nothing short of bizarre"**

tion WOAI. Hearing the gunshots, some of the residents ran into the parking lot. One of them saw a gray truck driving out of the complex. "It's especially unsettling after many of them heard gunshots at this same apartment complex on Friday," explained TV reporter Kristina de Leon. "Police are trying to see if the shootings are connected."

Liz Johnson, vice president of Alamo City Recovery, the firm that employed Fernandez, announced that the company had set up a memorial fund, asking for donations from the public. "As many of you have heard, one of our drivers...was shot and killed early Tuesday morning while walking in an apartment community looking for a parking violator...Our thoughts and prayers are with the family of our driver, Jose Fernandez, during this terrible time," said Johnson.

Police eventually charged a graduate student from the University of Texas at San Antonio with the murder. Strangely, the student phoned 911 after the shooting, claiming to be named "Ben Wade" — a character in the movie *3:10 to Yuma*, which the student had just purchased at a local Target department store — and threat-

See DANGEROUS, DEADLY, BIZARRE, page 10



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**SHORT HAULS**

continued from page 6

about the CenturyR 2465, visit [www.millerind.com](http://www.millerind.com).

**Arrow Expansion.** Arrow Truck Sales, Inc., has opened a new store in Denver, Colorado. The new facility will be Arrow's 17th branch and will serve the entire Rocky Mountain region.

**Beacon Software's New Products.** Beacon Software offers a new Visual Dispatch module for its Dispatch-Anywhere towing and road service management software that will permit a completely visual dispatch experience. The calls and trucks (if a company has GPS) will be displayed on the same map. Visual Dispatch allows a company to accurately view a job so they can better direct the driver.

Beacon also offers three new editions of its DispatchAnywhere towing and road service management software:

- DispatchAnywhere Starter edition may be used for companies with less than eight trucks for Accounts Receivable.
- DispatchAnywhere Pro Edition is for companies with more than three trucks, adding unlimited automatic pricing and commission calculations, two-way messaging, automatic mileage calculations, Accounts Receivable and more.
- DispatchAnywhere Multi-Division adds the ability to support unlimited divisions and Visual Dispatch (enhanced mapping and GPS). All versions are integrated with Beacon's TowMagic to automatically receive electronic dispatches from USAC, Cross Country, Allstate and Signature motor clubs. For more on TowMagic or DispatchAnywhere, visit [www.towmagic.com](http://www.towmagic.com) or [www.dispatchanywhere.com](http://www.dispatchanywhere.com)



WreckMaster's new Century

**New Website.** Pierce Sales, international distributor of winches and recovery equipment, has launched a new website: [www.piercesales.com](http://www.piercesales.com)

***"The vehicles will be delivered and placed into service in Hanoi"***

**Miller Website Features.** On Miller's website, you can, via webcam, check out the outside inspection areas at Miller Industries. Go to [www.millerind.com](http://www.millerind.com) and look under the "extras" tab for "Outside Live Webcam."

Miller also tweets. Learn about new Miller products, keep track of the Miller Race Recovery Team at NASCAR races, or find out what tow show or training events the folks from Miller Industries will attend. Go to [twitter.com](http://twitter.com) and sign up to follow the tweets from Miller at <http://twitter.com/millerind>

**CTTA Against City Impounds.** Responding to concerns of California Tow Truck Association (CTTA) members about cities and counties competing in what has been considered private-sec-

tor business by establishing government-operated towing and/or storage facilities, the CTTA Board of Directors is taking a strong stance in opposition to this competition as unfair and is currently exploring avenues for assisting towing companies in California in combating this growing trend.

**New Online Column.** towPartners website at [www.towpartners.com](http://www.towpartners.com) features a new column called "Advisor Speaks," which will provide a daily informative article and permits members to submit their own pieces. The "Advisor Speaks" was initially loaded with over 50 pieces that are each less than one page in length.

**TX Legislation Now In Effect.**

- HB 2571 on "Payment Sign," Section 2303.159(a). VSF's are required to conspicuously post a sign that states: "This vehicle storage facility must accept payment by an electronic check, credit card, or debit card for any fee or charge associated with delivery or storage of a vehicle."
- HB 2571 on "Jurisdiction," Section 2308.453. Tow hearing jurisdiction changes from where the vehicle is stored to where it is towed from. Change your JP notification on all receipts and notifications to the correct precinct.

**OH and AL "Move Over" Laws.** As of July 1, tow truck operators are protected under Ohio's "Move Over" law. As of Aug. 1, tow truck operators are protected under Alabama's "Move Over" law.

**Hino To Be Grand Prize.** Hino Trucks has teamed up with Miller Industries to provide one lucky tow operator a chance to win a fully loaded 2010 Hino model 258ALP with a Century 12 Series LCG Carrier. The truck will be a part of a giveaway that benefits The Professional Wreckers of Florida (PWF) Education and Legislation Programs and will be raffled during next year's Florida Tow Show in Orlando. ❖

## Our Lost Towers & Industry Friends

**Andy Starmer.** The 36-year old Virginia tow truck driver died Aug. 9 after being struck by a suspected drunk driver. Starmer, who was preparing to tow a disabled vehicle from the highway, worked for Superior Towing and would have turned 37 the week he was killed.

According to a WTKR news story, "Clarence Patrick, who was Starmer's boss at Superior Towing adds, 'His last words were to tell the motorist that he needed to go to the other side of truck because it was dangerous out there and he would appreciate him standing to the side of the truck.'"

The driver, William Charles Burns, was charged with aggravated involuntary manslaughter in addition to DUI and reckless driving.

**Ralph Waldo McGuffey.** The 85-year old owner of McGuffey's Wrecker Service in Tallahassee, FL, passed away from natural causes on Aug. 6.

## Our Tow Heroes

**Exceptional Tow Boss.** A good deed by J.R. Bramlett, owner of Airline Towing in Calumet Park, Illinois, led to this July



Left: J.R. Bramlette

*Southtown Star* story: Two giant oak trees had fallen across Catholic Charities' garage during a storm earlier in the year. No money was available to have the trees removed. "Bramlett drove one of his massive tow trucks last week to the site and removed both trees, cutting everything up into firewood. 'Let's just say that was my donation to the church,' Bramlett said."

Bramlett was profiled by Footnotes in the April issue. Check out the story by going to [www.trfootnotes.com](http://www.trfootnotes.com) and click on "Past Issues."

**Lifesaver.** Mike MacDonough, a 31-year old tow truck driver and mechanic for R.J. Shore Automotive in Brandford, Connecticut, jumped into action after an accident on July 30 and saved the life of 55-year old Robert Mattson.

**Keeping An Eye Out.** Billy Stealy of Rothmund's Towing in Waynesville, Missouri, came upon an overturned pickup near an overnight construction work zone. According to the story in the *Pulaski County Daily*, Stealy

said, "We were coming down the on-ramp and spotted headlights and thought it was part of the construction. Well, we stopped and...looked and it was a pickup on its side there," Stealy said.

"Rothmund's Towing personnel hooked their tow cable onto the pickup to prevent it from completely rolling over and called emergency services to report the crash, subsequently removing the vehicle as well."

**Lending A Hand.** A July *Glenwood Springs Post Independent* story detailed how Mark Drummond of Mat Dog Towing & Recovery in Glenwood Springs, Colo. offered to help get Aaron Heideman back on the road after his van broke down in the Glenwood Canyon on a cross-country trip. According to the article, Heideman said, "I told him...that my water pump was broken and asked if he could help me."

"Drummond took Heideman to his van at the Bair Ranch Rest Area and spent about four hours replacing the cracked water pump. 'It was not an easy project on that van,' Drummond said. But he fixed it anyway. He felt

it was the right thing to do.

"Drummond said that he didn't mind helping, he just believes, 'what comes around goes around.' 'People should always help out their fellow person,' Drummond said. 'You never now when it's going to be you.'"

**Rescue After Accident.** An unnamed Florida tow truck driver pulled a man and his 11-year-old daughter out of a bus after an accident in late July. In the NBC6.net story, "The little girl, Sophia Durian, said the tow truck driver saved them. 'He helped us so much, he took everybody out of the car,' she said."

**Easing The Pain.** Thanks to the TRAA for sending out the info about Glen Mikel and his employees at G & S Service in Des Moines, Iowa. On June 30, a boat carried a couple over a dam in Des Moines, leading to the drowning of the husband but a very dramatic rescue of his wife. The boat was severely damaged and needed to be recovered from the Des Moines River. In July, G & S Service performed the work at no charge to provide some help after the woman's tragedy.



## TOW TECH

# Filling The Gap

## AutoReturn technology improves municipal towing



AutoReturn's CTO John Pendleton

By Jami Frankenberry

Just a few years ago, municipal towing in the city and county of San Francisco was in disarray. The company that had contracted to handle San Francisco tows for nearly 20 years was plagued by consumer complaints and accused of fraud. Customers blamed the company for stealing possessions from cars, while others accused the company of selling vehicles before owners could retrieve them. In separate court cases, more than 72,000 customers received refunds on storage fees and a fraud lawsuit brought by San Francisco and California officials was settled for \$5.7 million.

That was the storm AutoReturn, a municipal towing management and logistics company, waded into after winning the bidding process to take over the towing storage, customer service, and unclaimed vehicle disposal for San Francisco's approximately 70,000 annual tows.

"We believed there was a need, a hole, a gap," said John Wicker, AutoReturn's founder and CEO. "We knew we could create efficiency through technology." He added: "We're FedEx tracking meets Hertz gold service for municipal towing."

And while municipalities and towing companies benefit greatly, Wicker said, so do customers who have had their vehicles towed. "Getting towed is never a pleasant experience," Wicker said. "We try to make the process as painless as possible."

### Tech Knowledge

Wicker has a computer science degree and, he said, a history of using

technology to help businesses run more efficiently. A few years ago, he came up with an idea. "I wanted to find an old-world business and revolutionize it," said Wicker, a Virginia native who lived in San Francisco at the time.

Municipal towing "came to light," he said. "When you peel back the onion on municipal towing, there are a common set of problems around logistics and time."

So Wicker formed AutoReturn in 2002. His goal: To streamline the process of towing from initial dispatch to the end result, which is either a car's return to its owner or its sale at auction or other disposal. AutoReturn's technology and techniques are designed to help decrease these burdens for both the municipality and the owners of towed vehicles.

Most municipal tows begin with a call from a police officer to a central dispatcher for the city; that dispatcher then combs through the list of approved vendors and the selected towing company dispatches to a tower to the scene. That process, Wicker said, "is slow, prone to error, with not a lot of feedback...When things go wrong there's no way to fix it, and it's expensive."

AutoReturn's technology, he said, "enables us to bypass the tow company and go straight to the tow trucks. It changes the dispatchers from order-takers to problem-solvers. It dramatically reduces response times."

### Direct To Truck

"The real savings is the tow truck is dispatched correctly, to the closest truck with an available driver, and total response time is dramatically less,"



Dan Scanlan, vice president, Towing &amp; Quality Assurance

Wicker said. "The dispatch staff previously was on the phone; now they're freed from that exercise to look at operational data to move and respond. That changes driver behavior. Now when they realize they're going to be dispatched, they're out there in the city in more ideal locations to get the tow."

When AutoReturn's contract began in San Francisco, response time was in

the 20-minute range, according to John Pendleton, AutoReturn's Chief Technology Officer. "The changes we made in organization and process, we got it into the 18-minute range," he said. "Then when we implemented our technology, it dropped tow response time to 12 to 13 minutes, and

See TOW TECH, page 11



## CTTA:

### Private vs. Public

The California Tow Truck Association (CTTA) is on record in opposition to CA cities and counties competing with private sector business by establishing government-operated towing and/or storage facilities, viewing it as unfair competition. The CTTA is exploring ways to assist CA towing companies in combating this trend.

In a recent press release, the CTTA noted that many privately owned towing companies have gone to great expense and effort to comply with city and county requirements to tow under current contracts. "The Association is concerned that cities and counties 'are willing to use tax dollars to purchase equipment and land to compete in the private sector, thus taking away substantial revenue from the towing companies who have been providing these services for many years.'"

According to CTTA President James Kruger, "the negative effect that it will have within the communities will far outweigh any anticipated revenue these cities or counties may project operating their own vehicle impound facilities."

Jeff Hunter, CTTA Executive Director, added that "many of these private sector businesses will be forced to lay off employees, have equipment, land and facilities foreclosed upon, and for some, make the hard decision to close their doors."

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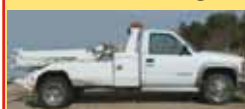
310676 - New 2009 Chevy  
K3500 Jerr-Dan MPL40  
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Auto., Auto Load Wheel  
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295634 New '09 Freightliner  
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Miles, Vulcan 881  
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304665 Used 1995 Chevrolet 6500, Cat 200 HP, Auto.,  
147220 Miles, 19' Champion Steel Carrier.



296596 New 2009 Sterling  
Acterra, Cummins ISB 6.7L,  
Automatic, 21' Steel Dual  
Angle Carrier.



290392 New 2008 Ford  
F550, 6.4D 325 HP, Auto.,  
Super Cab, Jerr-Dan MPL40  
Integrated Boom / Wheel Lift,  
Alum. Body.



279047 New 2008 Sterling  
Bullet 55, Cummins ISB 6.7L,  
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**Dangerous, Deadly, Bizarre**  
continued from page 7

ened to shoot a witness if the police didn't call back within five minutes.

Though the student didn't follow through on his threat, police eventually linked him to a bank robbery and another shooting. He was arrested and held on a \$2 million bond.

**In Cold Blood**

Two hundred miles west in the city of Houston, Mario Jove, a tow truck driver for Spring Branch Towing, was growing increasingly dissatisfied with his job. As the *Houston Chronicle* reported, "At first, the good money seemed to be a fair trade for the stress and long hours required to do the job. But as time wore on, Jove decided towing the cars of disgruntled people in a high-crime area was not worth the pay, his family members said." He had spent six months on the job and decided it wasn't for him.

Not a problem — many people try out certain jobs to determine whether they're a good fit. But before he could switch careers, Jove was gunned down in cold blood.

On September 28, 2008, Jove came upon an illegally parked car in an apartment complex and prepared to tow it away. It was a little after five p.m. Two men were sitting in the car, drinking. After Jove snapped a photo for documentation, one of the men in the car jumped out and fired a weapon at Jove, hitting the tower in the

back repeatedly. Jove collapsed on the ground as the shooter jumped back into the car and drove off.

The one item that could help police solve the case — the photo that Jove took — wasn't accessible because something happened to the camera when Jove dropped it after being shot.

"It's not one of those cases where it's a bad guy shooting a bad guy," Houston Detective Ray Leon said, adding that Jove was "a hardworking guy trying to take care of his family."

***"Nothing could have prepared him for what happened"***

Meanwhile on the west coast, Performance Towing in Merced, CA, was missing one of the vehicles in its fleet. Someone stole the company's white GMC 1500 pickup on a Monday night in November 2008. Later that evening Randall Armendariz, Sr., one of the drivers at Performance Towing, saw the missing vehicle on the street and confronted the thief, who pulled a gun and shot Armendariz in the head. Police pronounced the tower, a father of four, dead at the scene. The stolen truck was left with the engine running and the door open.

Armendariz was a "good, likable" person, recalled one of his co-work-

ers. "We went on a lot of trips together getting cars."

**BIZARRE**

Pure coincidence resulted in one tower's inadvertent death. A tow truck driver was starting a right-hand turn in a Phoenix neighborhood when a single bullet suddenly shattered the windshield of the tow truck and hit him.

Nearby a man ran out of his house and saw the tower lying on the ground. The truck was rolling toward a nearby house. The man jumped into the truck and slammed on the brakes, then checked the tow truck driver. But the tower was already dead.

Where had the bullet come from? It turned out that man who helped the tower was the same person who had shot him. He had been cleaning a rifle inside his one-story house when the gun went off by accident. The bullet sliced through the blinds, cracked the window, and screamed toward the tow truck, killing the driver.

In a perhaps even more bizarre but not deadly incident, last April the *North Shore Outlook*, a newspaper covering the Vancouver area, introduced tower Mitchell Martin to its readers in this way: "He's repossessed a Hells Angels enforcer's prized Dodge Viper and Mercedes, both in the same week, had dirty diapers hurled at his head and been kicked in the face while operating his tow truck."

Obviously Martin had dealt with a variety of situations during his time on

the road. But nothing could have prepared him for what happened when he tried to remove an illegally parked SUV from the underground parking lot at a local medical center. The owner of the SUV, a pregnant woman, accosted Martin as he hooked up her vehicle to his wrecker. Several more pregnant women got involved as well.

The *Outlook* described what happened next: "Outnumbered, Martin decided it was best to lock himself inside the truck and call the [police]. Even the young son of one of the rampaging women joined in with a verbal uppercut: 'F--- you, Mr. Tow Truck.'"

Martin sat in his cab, watching as the women threw his equipment off his truck, broke the side mirror and made scratches in the paint. Although Martin survived the ordeal, he remembered it as the worst incident he had ever encountered in his decade-long career in the towing industry.

Although towers know to stay vigilant and safe while out on the road, there's only so much they can do to guard themselves against the sudden appearance of a gun or knife at incident scene. Hopefully, knowing what some towers have experienced — towers who were threatened, injured or, shockingly, murdered — will help others survive similar incidents in the future.

*The stories in this article were culled from various news sources and from Footnotes' own [www.TheTowBlog.com](http://www.TheTowBlog.com), which is written and edited by Associate Editor Cyndi Kight. Our deepest condolences to the families of the towers who were lost in the line of duty.*

 <p><b>301 S. Kitley Ave Indianapolis, IN. 46219</b></p>  <p><b>1989 PETERBILT 400 CUMMINS ENGINE</b>, engine brake, 13sp Trans, Vulcan 940 wrecker body, 3 LED light bars, 24.5 tires, dual fuel tanks, aluminum wheels, air ride suspension, 475,000 miles, A/C, jumper cables, pintle hook/5th wheel plate, dual air cleaners.</p>	 <p><b>2002 INTERNATIONAL DT466 ENGINE</b>, Automatic Trans, A/C, PW P/L, 2 fuel tanks, air brakes, 379,891 miles, aluminum wheels, Century Bed, stationary headboard, wheel lift, 3 tool boxes. <b>\$17,000</b></p>	 <p><b>1999 STERLING 3126 CAT. ENGINE</b>, 6sp M/T, 21ft NRC Carrier, [2] underbody storage baskets, W/L, new strobe bar, 22.5 tires, dual fuel tanks, aluminum wheels, air ride suspension, 275,000 miles, A/C, 33,000GW</p>	<p><b>Contact Brian Meyer 317-359-9611</b></p>  <p><b>2003 ISUZU TOW TRUCK 14,500 GVW</b>, Century self loader, 134,000 miles, A/T, A/C, [2] tunnel tool boxes, dollies, single winch.</p>
 <p><b>395 Riverside Ave. Medford, MA. 02155</b></p>  <p><b>2000 CHEVROLET HD-3500 6.4L Diesel</b>, Auto trans, Pwr windows, Pwr locks, A/C, Vulcan 804 wheel lift W/ single winch. <b>\$12,000</b></p>	 <p><b>2001 CHEVROLET 6500</b> Century ramp with wheel lift, 3126 cat engine, hydraulic brakes, 19.5 tires, 25,500 GVW. 2 tool boxes, A/C, Pwr locks, Pwr windows, removable rails. <b>\$14,800</b></p>	 <p><b>1998 INTERNATIONAL</b> 21ft century ramp with wheel lift, DT466 engine, with air compressor, hydraulic brakes, 19.5 tires, 25,500 GVW. 4 tool boxes, removable rails. A/C, Pwr locks, Pwr windows. <b>\$12,250</b></p>	<p><b>For Information And Prices: John Shaughnessy 781-395-0808 Steve Kusmin 781-395-0808</b></p>  <p><b>1998-FREIGHTLINER</b> 21ft century ramp with wheel lift (102" bed width), 5.9L Cummins engine, 5sp. Manual trans, hydraulic brakes, 22.5 tires, 25,500 GVW. Stationary headboard, 4 tool boxes, A/C, Pwr locks, Pwr windows. <b>\$11,500</b></p>
 <p><b>6311 Centennial Blvd. Nashville, TN. 37209</b></p>  <p><b>1989 Peterbilt sleeper</b>, CAT 3406B, 425 HP, engine brake, 15 sp trans, Century 5030, <b>\$52,800</b></p>	 <p><b>2000 Ford F450</b>, 6.0L diesel, AT, Century 301 self loader, single winch, dollies, <b>\$13,500</b></p>	 <p><b>1998 Sterling L7500</b>, 3126 CAT engine, 186 HP, exhaust brake, 6 speed manual trans, air ride, dual fuel tanks, 21 ft NRC carrier, 2 frame mounted storage boxes, <b>\$15,000</b></p>	<p><b>Contact Larry Boggs G.M. 615-350-5800</b></p>  <p><b>1996 International Eagle sleeper</b>, CAT 3406, 475 HP, engine brake, 13 sp trans, Century 5030, <b>\$55,400</b></p>

# THREE CLOSE ONES

## He's uninjured but lucky to have survived

By Alison Johnson

Three times in three months, Tom Lehto had such close calls on the side of Minnesota's wintry highways that he feels lucky to be alive, much less still driving his trucks. The 40-year-old tower hopes his stories will reinforce the safety rules that he feels all towers need to follow, having learned the lessons firsthand. He also hopes that the stories may somehow inspire states to change how they enforce Move Over laws and permit motorists to get their licenses renewed.

"I just think a lot more attention needs to be paid by everyone," said Lehto, who after three years in the towing business is a relative newcomer. "For me, it has been a real crash course in the dangers that all towers have to face."

Lehto's first near-miss came last November when he was on the side of a road trying to upright a Ford F-150 pickup truck that had rolled over during afternoon rush hour traffic. The female driver was standing near him, watching him work. Out of the corner of his eye, Lehto saw a big tractor-trailer lose control on the icy road and barrel right toward him.

"Your life flashes before you and you think, 'Wait, it wasn't even that interesting yet,'" he said. "There are all kinds of things you think about – like all the things you've wanted to do but haven't. Things move in slow motion. I remember taking two long steps to take off to run but not much else after that."

The truck slammed into Lehto's rig, and he went down — he believes he may have tripped over a tire on his truck. Unconscious for about 20 minutes, he awoke to find a policeman hovering over him, telling him he'd be fine. He had torn a muscle in his shoulder and fractured his collarbone. The woman he was helping, meanwhile, was hit only lightly by the bumper of Lehto's truck and didn't need medical treatment.

"We were just so lucky," he said. "That's all I can say. I just shake my head thinking about it."

### Two More

The second scary moment came in December, again during rush hour, when Lehto was using one of his heavy-duty trucks to winch out a UPS box truck that had toppled over on its side. He was walking up from a ditch with a drive shaft to place on his wrecker from the UPS truck when another truck barreled down the highway. It slid into the back of his truck with enough force to rip its axle clean off from underneath it. Miraculously, no one was hurt.

Then came January. Lehto and a

state trooper were working a noontime roll-over accident involving a sports utility vehicle. Yet again, a truck hit his rig, pushing it into the trooper's car, which then ran into a fire truck also on the scene (The trooper was treated for back pain.).

On the highway behind them, other cars began running off the road in a chain reaction. "As I turned around, everywhere I looked, I saw cars going into ditches," Lehto remembered. "There were about 60 vehicles involved in a matter of seconds."

Roads were slippery, but Lehto doesn't consider that a good excuse. "If you see the glossiness on a highway, you should be able to recognize that and judge and read the road," he said.

### Some Solutions

That's why he wishes anyone renewing a driver's license would have to take a test on navigating wintry roads and driving defensively, especially in states with frequent snow and ice. "It shouldn't just be pay a fee and you're on your way," he said. SUV drivers tend to be particularly at risk, he added: "They think that with four-wheel drive, they can go fast," he said. "We tow a lot of those."

Lehto urges other towers to visit [www.respondersafety.com](http://www.respondersafety.com) for information on the latest state laws and safety equipment, and to train all their employees on basics such as setting up a work zone.

He also suggests that towing business owners find out exactly what their insurance policy will pay for in the case of such roadside accidents. In his case, Lehto learned he wouldn't get payments for lost revenue when his trucks needed repairs. "I found out the hard way," he said. He since has added that coverage.

And like many towers, Lehto would like police to enforce Move Over laws more vigorously and for tow businesses to be more supportive of each other. Too often, he believes, towers trash talk one another and cut their rates too low for anyone to thrive, rather than acting in the best interests of the industry.

Lehto is a co-owner of Gopher Towing & Recovery in Edina, Minnesota, southwest of Minneapolis. The company has six employees and operates six trucks: two carriers, one light-duty, one medium-duty and two heavy-duty trucks. It specializes in recovery work and auto transport.

Lehto started out in salvage work, and stepping into towing has been an eye-opener. "It's tough work," he said. "It's been a reality check for me, but it also can be very rewarding. I want to stick with it. I'd just like to see some things change." ☘

## TOW TECH

continued from page 9

now we're approaching 11 minutes. It's just a substantial reduction."

When AutoReturn began their initially daunting task in San Francisco, they had to work with more than a dozen different towing companies –

**"Municipal officials  
have never seen  
anything like it"**

including some they weren't so sure about. AutoReturn officials expected to find "a bunch of poorly performing subcontractors," Wicker said. "We actually thought we'd have to replace them." But 13 of the 15 companies were kept on board – "quite a surprise to us," he added.

### Raised Standards

AutoReturn began by adding some rules for the towing companies they were working with. "We treat them as the pros they are and we've raised the standards," said Dan Scanlan, AutoReturn's Vice President of Quality

Assurance, who previously worked for AAA for nearly 20 years. "They all must be in uniform, the trucks must meet certain appearance standards, and they have very specific standards that they have to meet. We don't tell them what to do; we give them advice on things like where they might park their trucks. We provide them the tools that they need to do the job correctly."

Those tools include customer service training and safety training. "We let them know if they do a good job they will be rewarded for it," Scanlan said. "All the drivers are professional, and we're very proud of them."

AutoReturn also ranks the towers and shares those rankings – evaluating response time, complaints, equipment, and equipment availability. "It's a complex formula," Wicker said, "kind of like the BCS (college football rankings)."

### How It Works

AutoReturn has about 60 employees and works with a fleet of more than 100 tow trucks in San Francisco, where the company fields about 70,000 tow calls per year. The company annually sells approximately 10,000 towed vehicles that go unclaimed in its weekly auctions.

AutoReturn's call center takes about 12,000 calls per month – some from those not-so-happy customers wondering where their car is and why it was towed.

See TOW TECH, page 17

Holmes parts Jerr-Dan parts Century parts

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## Swiveling Hitch

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Inventive Products' adjustable hitch

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***"The hitch automatically aligns the trailer behind the truck"***

The Swivel-Loc Hitch is also available in a vertically adjustable version. The Adjustable Drop Swivel-Loc Hitch boasts a six-inch drop, five-inch rise, and can be stowed backwards so the hitch is concealed under the bumper. See [www.inventiveproducts.net](http://www.inventiveproducts.net). If interested in a dealership, click on "Dealers" or contact Mike Ferrera at 888-310-6037.

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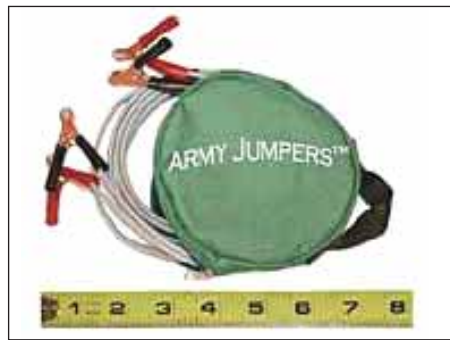
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Step N Tow's swing-out step

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# WHAT'S THE WORD?!

## An outspoken towman speaks out on towing today

By Allan T. Duffin

With a perfect safety record, dual businesses in towing and collision repair, and 28 years as the president of his own company, David Beer, the owner of Five Seasons Auto Rebuilders in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has seen a lot during his long career in auto repair and towing. He was willing to share with *Footnotes* readers his frank opinions on many topics of current interest to the industry.

He comes by his views honestly, based on his experience and high professional standards that have earned Five Seasons customer recognition awards from motor clubs and several *American Towman ACE Awards* for achievement in service performance.

First, a bit of background: Beer, a TRAA Level 1-certified tower, started in the towing business as a teenager. Fresh out of high school, he attended a



David Beer of Five Seasons Auto Rebuilders, Iowa

***“Dealerships are more inclined to call someone familiar”***

trade school to learn collision repair. After working at a repair facility for a short period, he quickly realized that he wanted to be his own boss. In July 1981, he opened Five Seasons Auto Rebuilders.

The business took off quickly. “We started out as strictly a collision repair facility, then branched out into towing,” said Beer. Initially the towing side of the business existed to help keep the collision-repair facility busy. “But we

found out quickly that our towing business was growing as quickly as collision repair,” he recalled. “Towing took on its own identity.”

What follows is Beer’s take on the current state of the towing industry:

### **One-Truck Wonders**

Beer noted that towers often start out small and slowly, growing their businesses over time. With steady guidance and attention to standards, towing companies can build strong

reputations and succeed in a highly competitive industry. Unfortunately, he said, this isn’t always the case. Some tow truck operators launch their businesses literally from their own garages — with less than stellar results.

Beer has noticed that, during the last year or two, motor clubs seem to be getting more comfortable with using contractors who have just one or two trucks. Often these tow truck operators work out of their homes. “It’s very hard to compete with companies like that because their overhead is so low,”

said Beer.

However, he added, very small towing companies also have a definite disadvantage in that they lack the assets or ability to respond to multiple, overlapping jobs in a timely manner. It can be difficult if not impossible to handle work for different municipalities and various commercial accounts at the same time.

“They can do one, maybe two — if they’re lucky — recoveries at a time,” explained Beer. Moreover, he said, such small firms don’t have the re-



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sources to ensure that their employees have the right training.

Although this situation is disturbing to larger towing companies, Beer acknowledged that the issue looks different from the auto clubs' point of view. "They're looking at the big picture," he said. "They're thinking, 'We can get services for X dollars from a major towing company, but we can get the same services for 20 percent less from a smaller company.'"

When small towing companies are moved to the primary position on a motor club's list of contractors, Beer

explained, larger towers are relegated to second position. This situation continues until the smaller companies can't handle the workload and the motor club is forced to move up to a larger towing firm.

### Dealer Decline

With regard to motor clubs and their contracts with towers, Beer has seen a number of changes over the last several years — changes exacerbated by today's difficult economy. "With Chrysler, for example, we've seen a steady



Five Seasons' fleet

decline of benefits," said Beer. "Fifteen years ago Chrysler paid for just about anything — door unlocks, jumpstarts, everything. We could go anywhere in the state and be fairly well assured that the call would be covered."

As time has passed, however, Beer has seen fewer and fewer benefits provided to the customer. Unlocking doors, for example, was removed from the benefits list "quite some time ago," he said.

These developments have trickled down to the towing industry." Looks like we'll have plenty of room to include another line. With fewer benefits offered to the customer, towing companies don't get those calls any more.

It's an ironic situation, said Beer: "Toyota, for example, has TV commercials that say their cars are more reliable mechanically. Yet at the same time they offer few services as a motor club for their cars."

On the other hand, Beer notes that General Motors — which, like Chrysler, is currently undergoing bankruptcy proceedings — offers "fantastic" benefits for roadside assistance. That, however, might be changing. In May, Chrysler announced its plans to shut down 789 of its 3,200 dealerships in the United States. The Associated Press quoted Chrysler as saying "that the

See **WHAT'S THE WORD?!**, page 16



AutoLoop's headquarters, Clearwater, FL

## Dealers Down, Business Up!

The bankruptcy of automakers like Chrysler and General Motors and the subsequent closing of multiple auto dealerships affects every company affiliated with these businesses — parts suppliers, equipment manufacturers, and motor clubs, to name several.

But instead of seeing things worsen as major automakers suffer through crisis after crisis, some automotive-related businesses claim to be actually experiencing growth.

In Clearwater, FL, AutoLoop ([www.autoloop.us/Default.aspx](http://www.autoloop.us/Default.aspx)) provides automatic post-sale and post-service customer follow-up for dealers, including systematically contacting customers to remind them of upcoming service needs and confirming their appointments. AutoLoop and the hundreds of dealerships it services are seeing an uptick in business — at a rate of 15 percent each month — during one of the worst economic times in America's history.

"We're growing because we're effectively helping dealerships drive more customer attention to their stores," said Steve Anderson, president of AutoLoop. That customer attention is critical, he explained, because dealerships are selling fewer cars in a down economy and more vehicles are getting serviced because of fewer trade-ins and increasing vehicle age.

By using a marketing system that automates email reminders, text messages, interactive voice calls, and print media, Anderson said that AutoLoop helps boost dealer business "in a way that doesn't

require effort from the dealership itself." And, he added, AutoLoop's automated marketing and reporting gives the dealerships a way to "strategically bring their customers back without having to hire more personnel."

Cross Country Automotive Services ([www.crosscountry-auto.com](http://www.crosscountry-auto.com)), based in Medford, Massachusetts, is the motor club contractor for General Motors. How is the automaker's recent bankruptcy announcement affecting Cross Country's business? Not much at all, according to Amy Villeneuve, executive vice president of marketing, strategy, and product innovation. "Our business is diversified in terms of clients and services, which gives us stability."

"We're actually adding auto and insurance customers," she maintained, "because...it comes down to providing real value at a time when the average age of a vehicle on the road is rising and the tough economy is forcing many folks to put off or delay new vehicle purchases."

"We're in the process of introducing a discount program for our service providers," said Charlie Cavolina, senior vice president of service delivery (see *other sidebar*). "We're working with major brands to get discounts on fuel cards, tow parts, uniforms, health care, phone service — even trucks."

So why are some automotive-related companies seeing a boost in business in an economic environment where the opposite is expected? According to these company representatives, it's about providing good value: helping customers, whoever they are, get more efficient and innovative service for their money in lean times. Villeneuve said, "Our job is to keep looking for — and finding — new and innovative ways to be of value to everybody: drivers, automakers, and service providers."

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lem with municipal, law enforcement, state, and county contracts, he said, is that they can lend themselves to ethically questionable behavior. "People in law enforcement or city municipalities tend to want to make sure their friend has the contract, rather than the guy they think will do the best job," said Beer. "In 30 years I haven't seen a fairly bid municipal contract in our area."

Why does this happen? "In Cedar Rapids, towing is treated as a cash cow," he explained. "Our municipality charges a city administrative fee for towing that is more than the contract bid price and gives nothing back to the industry." Beer maintains that the local government "is fixated on a single-tower award with no tower input. Under our single-bid tower contract, if you complain, you're disqualified," he said.

With this in mind, Beer typically avoids bidding on municipal contracts in his area "because they're so difficult to get and keep." People who are charged with enforcing the rules and standards of the contracts, he added, have a difficult job because the standards are almost unrealistic, "and they only enforce them when they want to."

### Setting Standards

Over the years Beer has collected a number of tenets that guide him in his business. "Succeeding in this industry takes a delicate balance of business savvy — of keeping our trucks rolling while at the same time conducting business in a workman-like manner," he said.

Beer has seen his share of unprofessional behavior in the industry, but is heartened to see many towers who do their jobs with pride and high standards. "I'd like the industry to get to the point where it's less critical of itself," said Beer, "and polices itself in a professional manner rather than trying to undercut the next guy." Such cooperation and self-evaluation, he believes, will benefit every towing company, large or small.

Moreover, Beer feels that the services provided by towing companies are extremely undervalued. "How often, if you call any service at three in the morning, can you get anything for \$50? That's a good deal!" And, he added, many motor clubs are paying towers less than \$50 — 30 to 50 percent less, in fact. "I realize that this is a business and that you don't always have to be appreciated for what you do, but our services are definitely undervalued."

By the same token, said Beer, towers need to ensure that they recognize their own value as well. "If, for example, we choose to work for rates that are less than the cost of production, it's our own fault."

Setting the bar high is important as towers look to the future. "It's our industry," noted Beer. "As tow truck owners and operators, it's our choice what we allow in the industry."

Readers are encouraged to comment on Beer's views, agree or disagree. Send any responses to [bcandler@traderonline.com](mailto:bcandler@traderonline.com)

## TOW TECH

continued from page 11

That's where technology comes in again to make things easier. AutoReturn has a valuable web site ([www.utoreturn.com](http://www.utoreturn.com)) for customers looking for information on how to get their car back, what they'll need in order to do that, and a list of fees.

At the company's walk-in centers, customers take a ticket when they arrive so they're not waiting in line. AutoReturn's web site says customer wait time is under 73 seconds, and offices are open 24 hours per day and every day of the year.

An Internet message board sampling found the usual complaints about towing, but there were plenty showing that AutoReturn's work is appreciated.

"Being towed is a horrible experience," wrote one first-time customer. "The folks at AutoReturn made it much easier to accept. Very pleasant and no wait."

Wrote another, "They made it easy and I was out in minutes."

### Expansion Plans

AutoReturn's success in San Francisco has enabled the company to expand. Recently, AutoReturn and Baltimore County, the largest jurisdiction in the Baltimore metropolitan area, agreed to a contract.

"We consistently get feedback that municipal officials have never seen anything like it," Wicker said of his company's services. "They get very excited about it because seeing it explains the technology and they immediately see the value of what we do."

With each city comes different needs. "We only roll out the capabilities...they choose to utilize," Wicker said. "We sit down with a city and see what they need. It's a cookie-cutter approach."

San Francisco towing, though, needed to be fixed, and AutoReturn provided the correct tools. "In San Francisco," Wicker said. "We use everything we've built." ❖



## What Makes Men Tick

- If Laura, Kate, and Sarah go out for lunch, they will call each other Laura, Kate, and Sarah. If Mike, Dave, and John go out, they will affectionately refer to each other as Fat Boy, Godzilla, and Four-Eyes.
- When the restaurant bill arrives, Mike, Dave, and John will each throw in \$20, even though the bill is only for \$32.50. None of them will have anything smaller and none will actually admit they want change back. When the girls get their bill, out come the pocket calculators.
- A man will pay two dollars for a one-dollar item he needs. A woman will pay one dollar for a two-dollar item that she doesn't need but it's on sale.
- A man has six items in his bathroom: toothbrush, toothpaste, shaving cream, razor, a bar of soap, and a towel. The average number of items in the typical woman's bathroom is 238. A man would not be able to identify more than 20 of these items.
- A woman has the last word in any argument. Anything a man says after that is the beginning of a new argument.
- A woman marries a man expecting he will change, but he doesn't. A man marries a woman expecting that she won't change, but she does.
- A woman will dress up to go shopping, water the plants, empty the trash, answer the phone, read a book, and get the mail. A man will dress up for weddings and funerals.
- A woman knows all about her children. She knows about dentist appointments and romances, best friends, favorite foods, secret fears, and hopes and dreams. A man is vaguely aware of some short people living in the house.

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## TOW TALES

# A Whale Of A Job!

*But it was no fun hoisting a huge, smelly carcass*



North County hauls up a dead whale

By Lisa Bakewell

“If it can be lifted, hopefully we can figure out a way to do it,” said Bill Scribner, president and owner of North County Recovery & Towing in Santa Cruz, California. Their typical towing and recovery jobs include contract work for many of the area police departments, the county, the state parks, and several insurance companies.

They also tow vehicles for individuals needing their help, and not all of these tows have been land-based. “We’ve done numerous recoveries off of the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf,” Scribner said. “For instance, we’ve recovered vehicles that have ended up off of the wharf into the water.”

After nearly 25 years in the towing and recovery business, though, Scribner, like many towers, has seen his fair share of challenges beyond the typical recovery and towing jobs. North County has lifted an elephant seal from the beach at Ano Nuevo State



The whale is way down the cliff

Reserve, hoisted several fallen horses, and, most recently, performed one of their most interesting recoveries to date — they retrieved a gray whale from the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf area last spring.

### In Too Close

For residents of Santa Cruz, it’s not unusual to see gray whales off the wharf, especially when they are in the midst of their annual migration from Mexican to Alaskan waters. During that time, the whales travel relatively close to the Central Coast. In fact, according to residents, the 25-foot gray whale yearling had been spotted near the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf prior to its death.

Soon after the sighting, Wharf employees found the whale carcass floating next to the wharf. Not knowing exactly what to do with it, they decid-

ed that it might be best to have it towed back out to sea. “They did,” said Scribner, “and they let it go at about mile 30. Within a couple of hours, though, the whale floated back into shore. At that point they had a real problem because now the whale was on the beach.”

According to Scribner, the whale was a little further up onto the beach than Wharf officials had thought and there was really no way to pull it back out to sea a second time. Dan Buecher, the Wharf’s head supervisor, said that a reef, rocks, and sizeable waves made that option too dangerous.

But something needed to be done; the whale couldn’t stay where it was. Not only was the cove too small to bury a whale of this size, the federal marine authorities declared the carcass a health hazard.

See TOW TALES, page 20



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## TOW TALES

continued from page 18

### Call The Pros

Wharf officials decided that lifting the whale off the beach and hauling it away would be their best bet. And because of Scribner's years of experience and his long-standing relationship with the county, North County Recovery & Towing was the company they called.

"They asked us, 'Do you think you can do this?' said Scribner. 'I said, 'Well, I believe we can, let's take a look.' So I went down the day before and took a look. At that point, we decided, 'Yes, it was something that we could do.' We'd need a little bit of equipment, though, but it wasn't going to be that hard."

The primary equipment needed for this heavy lift were straps — good, strong ones, according to Scribner — so they used straps provided by Wharf personnel, the same ones used to pull cars from the water in the Wharf area. "We were hoping to insure that we weren't going to break the whale into pieces," Scribner said, "and have to deal with more than one piece."

### Good Choice

Since the whale would be hoisted out of the rocky cove, up the cliff about 120 feet and onto a flatbed trailer, proper strapping was critical to keep the whale from breaking, ex-



Up and ready to lift onto the carrier

ploding, or crashing back down to the cove. To make the whale as stable as possible, it was strapped underneath and secured with a center point to pull from by wharf personnel.

According to Garth Taylor, one of the construction workers at the wharf, the biggest concern wasn't getting the whale strapped. There was definitely room enough between the whale, the sand, and the rocks to get straps

through with a pole. His biggest concern was which type of strap to use to keep the whale intact.

If Taylor used a cinch wrap, it would hold the whale securely — and that was a good thing— but it might cut right through the whale. If he used a cradle wrap, the whale might slide through the straps when it was lifted and come crashing down from the cliff. Either way, he might have a huge mess.

Taylor ultimately chose to use the cinch wrap, which would tighten up against the whale when North County lifted it. With fingers crossed, he was hoping that he'd made the right choice. "Turns out that he was right," said Tim Cattera, an employee of Scribner's at North County for over four years. "It worked perfectly!"

### Dead Lift

The vehicles that North County used to make the whale recovery were a 1989 Peterbilt with a 925 Century rig and a 2003 Ford F550 with a Jerr-Dan 10-ton boom. With the 10-ton boom, North County was able to move out over the edge with the full extension and lift the whale out of the cove.

Wharf officials supplied an equipment trailer to carry the whale carcass. According to onlookers, the trailer "squatted" from the whale's six-ton weight when it was lowered onto it.

Scribner and Cattera were the only crew from North County at the recovery. But, according to Cattera, they had a lot of help. "We had the help of the City of Santa Cruz wharf construction workers" to strap the whale, he said. Also on the beach helping were two Wharf supervisors.

"All these guys did an absolutely great job helping out with the recovery of this whale," said Cattera, who is an experienced tow truck driver. "We also had the Santa Cruz police department. They helped with crowd control and the closure of the street so that we could get our big rig set up and ready to use."

The 25-foot, six-ton whale carcass was successfully hoisted from the rocky cove, up the cliff, and onto a flatbed truck with no problems. "They called us, we went out, and we had it out of there in about an hour and a

## On Gray Whales

- Gray whales are found only in the North Pacific along the West Coast of North America and along the coast of eastern Asia
- The gray whale is one of the animal kingdom's great migratory mammals
- Some gray whales swim 12,430 miles round-trip from their summer home in Alaskan waters to the warmer waters off the Mexican coast
- Gray whales surface to breathe, so migrating groups are often spotted from the West Coast of the United States
- Gray whales travel in groups called pods
- In November and December, the North American whale migrates south to Baja California, Mexico
- Whale calves are born from early January to mid-February in lagoons and bays
- Female whales (cows) and newborn calves migrate northward between March and June

Source: National Geographic website ([animals.nationalgeographic.com](http://animals.nationalgeographic.com)) and the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (National Marine Fisheries Service; NOAA Fisheries) website ([www.afsc.noaa.gov](http://www.afsc.noaa.gov))

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The carcass is airborne

half,” said Scribner. “We loaded it on a trailer and away it went!”

### Smelly Success

What could have been a very messy situation, wasn't. “There was a very small amount of foam that came out

as originally intended, Wharf officials can take solace in the fact that it was, at least, a burial next to the sea. 🐋

## North County

In 1985, William (Bill) and Karen Scribner started North County Towing and started with three trucks. Since acquiring their first major contract with the California State Automobile Association (CSAA) in 1989, they've upsized, then downsized, and even reorganized to finally build the strong business that they have today.

Currently, North County runs with six trucks and five employees. Of their employees, four are family. Scribner and his wife work alongside their son, 24-year-old Matt (who's been going on tows since he was one) and Willie, their son-in-law who's been with them for almost six years. Tim Cattera is the only non-family member, though he's been with them for almost five years.

Today, Santa Cruz's North County tows for several area police departments, the state parks, several insurance companies, and individual customers. North County Recovery & Towing is a member of the California Tow Truck Association (CTTA). They can be reached at 831-458-3138 or toll-free at 800-SOS-4TOW. California

**“His biggest concern was which type of strap to use”**

onto the ground,” said Scribner, “but it was washed off by the fire department. It didn't break open or anything like that.”

“It was smelly for sure, though,” said Cattera, “and it was just odd to pull up a dead whale from the location that it was at, but everything went smooth — and I'm glad. It will sure remain in my history of odd recoveries.”

And, though the whale was finally buried at the landfill instead of at sea



The carcass is airborne

## ON THE JOB

# Routine & Ridiculous

*Fun with a few questions towers are frequently asked*



Ryan Schade, 1, and Nick Schade of Tony's Wrecker Service

By Allan T. Duffin

The phone rings in Jeff Watson's office. He picks up the receiver and puts it to his ear. A harried voice on the other end of the line asks a very serious question: Do you have tow trucks?

Watson, owner of Avilla Motor Works, Inc., in Avilla, Indiana, gets this question a lot. And he always answers “Yes,” very politely. Then the potential customer asks the typical follow-up question: *How much would you charge me?*

Watson gets a fix on the type of vehicle, quotes his rate, hops in his truck, and motors out to the incident site.

When he gets there, sometimes he wishes he had asked a few more questions. “I show up and it turns out the car, truck, or tractor is upside down or 300 feet off the road or stuck to the frame in mud,” said Watson. “You do what you have to do, and then you hand them the bill, only to hear them

start pissing and moaning about what the job cost them.”

Watson's patient response: “Look, I didn't build it, buy it, or break it.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Towers are used to answering a myriad of routine questions from their customers. Some of those questions have been asked a million times, on every job, every day. But other questions come out of left field. Like this one: During one recovery job, Mike Patellis, owner of Alpha Towing, Inc., in Marietta, GA, pulled his wrecker to a stop and jumped out. The customer who had called him was waiting with a question: *Are you the fella who came out here last time?*

You get the idea. Such questions made us curious about some of the

See ON THE JOB, page 22

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**ON THE JOB**

continued from page 21

usual and unusual things towers get asked. We asked tow pros around the country for their lists of top questions, and here's what they told us.

***“I didn’t build it, buy it, or break it”***

**The Basic Ones**

Let’s start with questions answered by local governments, which often compile helpful information for residents whose vehicles have been towed without their consent. For example, in Arlington County, Virginia, a one-page brochure addresses basic questions like these:

- If my car has been towed, what do I do to find it?
- Can I be towed from the parking lot of a closed business?



Al Gregg (second from right) and crew at Dakota Service

- Why would a business care about parking in the lot when it’s closed?
  - If I return before the tow truck removes my car, do I still have to pay?
- Sometimes tow companies provide a list of frequently asked questions to potential customers. Chico Towing in Bremerton, Washington, shares information about towing and impound services on its web site. The first question on the list is at the top of most towers’ greatest hits: *If I call for a tow,*

*how long will it take for your truck to reach me?*

“We try to reach all our customers within 30 to 45 minutes,” is the answer on the Chico web site. “This is typically a reasonable expectation. However, during peak times it may take 30 minutes or more extra. In adverse weather conditions, we always try to reach people exposed to the elements before those safely indoors.”

That’s about the same amount of time that Jesse DeGraeve, owner of Anytime Towing in Traverse City, Michigan tells people when he’s asked the same question. “Usually people are looking for a quick response time,” DeGraeve explains. “We shoot for within 30 to 45 minutes depending on the location of the call and how busy we are.”

Some customers are more savvy than others when it comes to the technical requirements for towing a vehicle. Patellis has been asked if he has flatbed trucks in his vehicle fleet. In Brookings, SD, Al Gregg, operations supervisor for Dakota Towing Service, recalls being queried by the owner of a car regarding a front-end tow. *Do you need to put the car in neutral?* asked the customer.

**On The Scene**

Then there’s the issue of payment. “Every customer wants to know how much our services are going to cost them to get the job done,” said DeGraeve. “We have a set rate schedule that we go off to give them an accurate figure.”

Nick Schade, director of operations for Tony’s Wrecker Service in Louisville, KY, notes that one of the top questions he’s asked is: *What is it going to cost?* immediately followed by: *Why does it cost so much?*

Mike Eskew of Barnett’s Towing in Tucson, Arizona, gets a variation on the theme: *How cheap are you?* Eskew finds that amusing. “I’ve been called a lot of things,” he said, “but cheap isn’t one of them.”

When the job is done, Kevin Farthing, owner of Waffco Heavy Duty Towing in Lake Station, Indiana, sometimes has to debate his rate with an irate customer. *Do you take my motor club card?* “Ninety-nine percent of the time this answer is no,” said Farthing.

*Why so much?* asked one victim of a police-ordered tow. “My cousin got busted for the same thing last week in the next town over,” said the customer, “and it only cost half as much.”



Kevin Farthing (second from right) and the Waffco team

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Three on deck at Anytime Towing

Farthing shakes his head at the memory. "You just can't fix stupid, can you?"

Other questions are more specific. *Can you bill my insurance company or me?* "No to both," answers Eskew. In South Dakota, Al Gregg often gets a basic question: *Who do I make the check out to?* but also has to deal with young people who ask him: *Can you charge it to my parents?*

Then there are the towing jobs that end with an angry vehicle owner berating the tow truck driver for hitching up private property without their consent. *Why was my car towed and why is it so expensive?* "This is usually from the person whose car was involuntarily towed or impounded by the police, illegally parked, or abandoned and the property owner called to have it removed," explained DeGraeve.

In that type of situation, said DeGraeve, he and his staff try to explain the reason for the tow as well

as the reasons for the pricing. "Sometimes people are understanding about it," he said. "Other times, things can get interesting."

### What's Next?

Once everything's hooked up and the customer understands what he or she is paying, what's next? Time to get out of there. Is someone picking up the customer? Or is the customer accompanying the vehicle to its destination?

Although towers might take a customer along in the cab, the tow truck isn't a shuttle bus. Mike Eskew had to explain this to a customer who asked: *Can my four passengers ride in your truck?* Sometimes the question is an easier one: *Can you drop me off by my house on the way to the garage?*

Aware of the need for good customer service, most towers surely do their best to answer whatever ques-

tions are tossed their way as best they can, whether they've heard the question a million times or are thrown a curveball.

But sometimes even the most resourceful tower can be left speechless. Take this example that occurred when Patellis picked up a ringing phone in his office one day. He took down the details, answered the customer's standard queries about time

and money — and then wasn't sure what to say to the next question. Love must have been in the air that day, because the customer asked Patellis in all seriousness: *Can you send that girl driver out?*

*Can you top these questions? Send us your favorites, whether routine or ridiculous, and we'll consider running them in a future issue.* ☛

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**4-CAR ALUMINUM TOP RACK LIKE NEW 2005 CHEVRON SERIES 20, 4-car aluminum top rack. \$1,850**

**CHEVRON TWIN LINE 84" C/A**

**92 F-450, Diesel, 5 SPD, XLT, Rubber 80%, 84" Chevron 408 Eight Ton Hyd & Wheel Lift, 60" C/A Body w/24" Tunnel Box, (2) 9000 LB Planetary Winches, All Lighting & Options.**

**WRECKER \$6,500**

**87 F350, W/54K ORIGINAL MILES. 460 4 SPD w/ single cable 8 ton hydraulic and 3 500lb wheel lift, New Tires, A/C, P/S, Chrome Wheels, Run Boards, P/Bumper, Dollies, Single Cable Hydraulic & Wheel Lift.**

**97 Ford F450 XLT, 7.3 Diesel, 84"C/A, 5SPD, 8-ton Alum. Body w/Twin 10K winches, wheel lift, double doors each side, all Lighting & Options, Red, All New Injectors.**

**INEXPENSIVE FLAT BED \$14,900**

**95 INT'L 4700, T4 175 H/P Diesel, 5 SPD., A/C, P/S, P/W, Tilt, Tele Wheel, 21, 440 G.V.W., Chevron 19 Aluminum 2 car carrier with wheel lift, (2) 49" Aluminum tool boxes, Cable tension/Free Wheel/Roller, All Lighting and Options.**

**24,691 MILES**

**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.**

**#1373 New White 2008 k/w T-270, 260 h/p, air/brake/ride, comp. 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.**

**STATIONARY PYLON**

**09 FRTLNR, Diesel, Auto, Loaded, 220 H/P, air/brake/ride, comp Chevron 20.5" Steel, Removable Rails, Air Free Wheel, Pivoting L-Arms, All Lighting and Options, 102" Wide, (2) Add'l CHN Locks.**

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

**5YR/200K MILE WARRANTY**

**09 Freightliner M2, Cummins 260 H/P, Auto trans, compressor, air ride, loaded, Chevron 20.5, S-10 Steel 2 car carrier, 10K Deck capacity, 3K Wheel lift, stationary pylon, removable rails, 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.**

**5 PACK TRACTOR/TRAILER**

**01 INT'L 4900, 530 275 h/p, 9 spd., a/c, a/b, rubber 70%, 100K miles, (2) 50 gallon tanks, Landoll 334c, 5 car hauler, (4 car trailer and 1 cab over deck) (5) 8k winches, wireless remote, LIKE NEW**

**27,494 MILES**

**05 F-450, slt, 6.0, auto, 60" p/bumper, simulators, Chevron 408 twin line 8 ton & 4,000lb. wheel lift, pivot-L-receivers, aluminum L-arms, angled light pylon, sling stainless steel side panels, vista directional light bar.**

**08 F-450, XLT, 6.4, auto, loaded, 60 Dynamic 701BDW, 5,000lb. wheel lift, lightning low pro-body, 8K drag winch, in cab controls, auto-load crossbar, swing out dolly mounts & dollies, tex deck coating, l.e.d. bar all options**

**GAS V-10 AUTOLOAD**

**01 F-450 XLT, V-10 Gas Motor, Auto, 8 way pwr seat, pwr mirrors, 263K miles. (looks and runs great). Dynamic 701-B, 5,000lb wheel lift, 60" c/a, new crossbar/inner tube/pins, body and in-cab cuts, led's, all lighting and options. \$15,900.**

**EXTENDED CAB FORD 650**

**04 WHITE F-650, XLT, CAT 210 HP Cummins, Automatic, Loaded, 150k, Chevron 21.5' Aluminum 2-Car Carrier, Removable Rails, All Lighting & Options.**

**CHEVRON 4-CAR STEEL TOP RACK, 126" Long, 93.75" Wide, Sub Frame, (No Winch), \$1,500**

**CENTURY/BRO H/D WRECKER**

1672C 88 FRTLNR FLD, Cummins Big Cam 400 H/P, 176K Miles, (In Frame @ 120K), 13SPD, R/R, A/C, 36" Sleeper, Century/BRO, 212" C/B, 3 Stage, 123" Reach, 55,000 LB., Underlift, (1) Med. Drag Winch, (1) HD Drag Winch, New Rubber & Brakes, Clean Ready to Work. Non-Extendable Boom, (2) Large Up Right Boxes P/Side, 5PR of tools all lighting, Air Free Wheel, Passenger side remote.

**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.**

**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.**

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

**#1360 New White 2007 Frtlnr 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.**

**TIME TO GO (Cracked Motor)**

**CHEVRON 12 TON WRECKER ON 6500/108" C/A**

**02 6500 3126 CAT, 210 H/P, 6 SPD, 25,900 GVW, 104K Miles, Aluminum Wheels, Loaded, Chevron 512 LMD 12 Ton Wrecker & 8,000LB Underlift, All Attachments Lighting & Options ( Nice Shape) \$26,500**

**CHEVY AUTO TRANS.**

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.

**1 LEFT/SAVE \$10K OVER 2010**

**NEW 07 INT'L 4300 DT-466, 220 h/p, auto, loaded, Dynamic 765, 12 ton twin line hydraulic wrecker, 116" c/a (2) tunnel boxes, tow bar, all lighting and options**

**HOLMES 750, 25 TON EXTENDABLE BOOMS**

71 Ford LN 8000, 3208 CAT, 5/2SPD., 1100 x 22 Rubber, Push Bumper, (2) 50 Gallon Tanks, P/Side Stack, Holmes 750 twenty five ton square split boom wrecker, 108" C/A, H/D Truck Bar, Side Tool Boxes, All Lighting and Options, \$15,900

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**NEW International Units Ready to Go**

**09 International, White EXTEND CAB, auto, air brakes, air ride, exhaust brake, alcoas, 21' Vulcan Steel removable rail (vin 8977) \$ 78,950**

**NEW Ford 450 Units**

**2008 Ford F450, SUPER CAB white loaded chassis, auto, diesel, 60CA (vin 6830) Ready to Build**

**2008 Ford F450, SUPER CAB, black loaded chassis, auto, diesel, Vulcan 810 Intruder (vin 6833) \$58,950**

**NEW GMC Units**

**NEW PRE-EMISSION 2007 Chev C6500, Black, Auto, Duramax Diesel, GVW 26,000, 21' Vulcan Steel, removable rails (vin 3132) \$ 65,950**

**NEW PRE-EMISSION 2007 Chev C6500, White, Auto, Duramax diesel, GVW 26,000, 21' Vulcan Steel, removable rails (vin 3227) \$ 65,950**

**NEW HINO Units**

**2008 Hino, white loaded chassis, auto, air brakes, 21' Century Steel Removable Rails (102")-(vin 0016) \$69,950**

**NEW Dodge Units**

**2009 Dodge Ram 4500, auto, white loaded chassis, 60CA, Vulcan 810 auto loader (vin3413) Call for Price**

**2008 Dodge Ram 5500 FOUR WHEEL DRIVE, auto, black loaded chassis, Vulcan 810 auto loader (vin 5555) \$64,950**

**2009 Dodge Ram 5500 FOUR DOOR, auto, white loaded chassis 60CA, Vulcan 882 twinline wrecker (vin 1482) \$69,725**

**2009 Dodge Ram 5500, auto, white loaded chassis, 19.6' Century Aluminum RR (vin546) \$62,950**

**2009 Dodge Ram 5500, auto, white loaded chassis, 19.6' Century Aluminum RR (vin545) \$62,950**

**2008 Dodge Ram 4500, auto, white loaded chassis 60CA, Vulcan 810 auto loader (vin 1279) \$58,950**

**2008 Dodge Ram 5500, Black, Auto, Vulcan 810 auto loader (vin 5664) \$61,950**

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

**NEW Peterbilt Unit**

**2009 Peterbilt 330, White, Auto, Air brakes, AirRide, Alcoas, 21' Century Steel, removable rails, 102" wide (Vin 0487) \$81,950**

**USED CARRIERS**

**2000 International 4700, 6+1 speed, 21' Century carrier removable rails (vin8145) mileage 109,962**

**Call for price**

**USED WRECKER**


**1999 UD 1800 with Vulcan 862 twinline wrecker (vin356) mileage 72,602 Call for Price**

**1998 Chev C6500, 6 speed, Holmes 552 twinline wrecker (vin 4298) mileage 176,247 Call for Price**

**1990 Ford F350, Holmes 440 hyd wrecker (vin 2123) mileage 45,679 Call for Price**

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**2005 FREIGHTLINER M2 CENTURY 21' STEEL CARRIER, REMOVABLE STEEL SIDE RAILS, INDEPENDENT WHEEL LIFT, GREAT USED UNIT WITH LESS THAN 10K MILES ON REMANUFACTURED ENGINE. CALL TODAY AND PUT THIS CARRIER TO WORK!**

**READY TO GO!!!**

**1998 KENWORTH W900, DAY CAB, 475 CAT, 10SP, AIR RIDE, NEW TIRES, BRAKES, KING PINS, EXHAUST AND MORE. 835K MILES, NEW CENTURY 5130/5230. NEW RED PAINT. THIS UNIT LOOKS AND DRIVES GREAT. CHECKOUT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE PICTURES.**

**1997 KENWORTH T600, CAT 3406, 435HP, 10SP, UNDER 700K MILES, 2001 CENTURY 7035, 35 TON, ALUM BOXES. LOOK AT THE PICTURES ON THE WEBSITE & GIVES US A CALL FOR DETAILS.**

**1984 PETERBILT 359 KIRBY GRANT CONVERSION, ZACK LIFT Z-20, REAR HYDRAULIC SPADES, GOOD UNIT, READ TO GO TO WORK TODAY**

**1989 FORD F800, 7.8 FORD TURBO DIESEL, 5SP, 2 SPEED AXLE, 33K GVW, 213K MILES. CENTURY 712 FILL, 14 TON BOOM, 12,000# WINCHES, 10,000# TWO STAGE UNDERLIFT. THIS 2 OWNER TRUCK HAS A LOT OF LIFE LEFT IN IT. SEE MORE PHOTOS ON OUR WEBSITE. BUY IT FOR ONLY \$18,900.00**

**2007 FORD F550, POWERSTROKE, AUTO, LOADED CAB, 120K MILES. CHAMPION 19.5 ALUMINUM CARRIER. WE SOLD THIS TRUCK NEW TO ONE OF OUR BEST CUSTOMERS. HE DOES TAKE CARE OF HIS EQUIPMENT. LOOK AT THE OTHER PHOTOS ON THE WEB SITE, WWW.CROUCHTOWTRUCKS.COM**

**2009 KENWORTH T800, CUMMINS ISX, 485HP, MILLER SPEC CHASSIS. 2009 CENTURY 7035 WITH EQUIPMENT. THIS IS A SHOW PIECE. CHECK THE PHOTOS ON THE WEB AND CALL FOR DETAILS.**

**99 IHC 4700, DT466 ENGINE, AUTO TRANS, LESS THAN 150K MILES. CENTURY 502, 10 TON BOOM WITH A F II 8,000# UNDERLIFT. ONLY \$24,900. CHECK IT OUT ON THE WEBSITE, WWW.CROUCHTOWTRUCKS.COM**

**2010 PETERBILT 330, 26,000 GVW, NO CDL, CUMMINS/PACCAR 300HP, ALLISON AUTO, AIR RIDE, AIR BRAKE, ALUM WHEELS, LOADED, CENTURY 21' STEEL, REMOVABLE RAIL CARRIER, LOADED WITH ACCESSORIES. WHITE TRUCK BLACK BED. RIDE IN STYLE.**

**2010 PETERBILT 330, 26,000 GVW, NON CDL, 300HP, PACCAR/CUMMINS POWER, ALLISON AUTO, AIR BRAKE, ALUM WHEELS. CENTURY 215 WITH SP800 SIDE PULLER. CHECK IT OUT ONLINE & CALL US!**

**2000 PETERBILT 377 CENTURY 5130, CAT 3406, 475HP, 10SP, 450K MILES, WRECKER INSTALLED AT CROUCH'S IN 2003. WELL EQUIPPED AND READY TO GO.**

**2008 FORD F450, LOADED, 4 LEFT. 1 CENTURY 312 TWIN LINE EXTENDABLE BOOK, 3 VULCAN 810, "SNATCH TRUCKS". PRICED TO MOVE OUT. TENNESSEE AND FLORIDA LOCATION. PICK OUT ONE ON OUR WEBSITE WWW.CROUCHTOWTRUCKS.COM AND GIVE US A CALL.**

**99 IHC 4700, DT466 ENGINE, AUTO TRANS, LESS THAN 150K MILES. CENTURY 502, 10 TON BOOM WITH A F II 8,000# UNDERLIFT. ONLY \$24,900. CHECK IT OUT ON THE WEBSITE, WWW.CROUCHTOWTRUCKS.COM**

**1985 FORD ITL 9000, CAT 3406, 13SPD, TRIAXLE, KEMP 40T CONVERSION WITH A ZACKLIFT Z402. THIS UNIT RUNS AND OPERATES WELL. IT WAS REFINISHED LAST YEAR. WOULD MAKE A GREAT INEXPENSIVE BACK UP.**

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2008 Ford F60 X/Cab XLT, 21 NRC Rollback 20K lb, 2 Tool Boxes, Light Bar \$74,500



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.



1996 Int'l 4700, 12 ton wrecker, DT466, 5spd, pw, tilt, ac, air brakes, Jerr-Dan 1210 bed, dual 10,000lb winches, wheel lift, tow truck. \$ 17,500



2007 Pete, Cat 18 SPD, NRC Sliding Rotator, 4 Winches, 50K lb Under Reach, Tunnel Tool Box, 96" Towmar Light Bar

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**50 ton wrecker**

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205-956-2852  
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**2000 KENWORTH, T-2000, 550 CAT, C-1500, 10 speed transmission, rebuilt, winch brake on front axle, 20,000 lb Air tag axle, aluminum wheels, new tires, 340" WB, cab to axle 185", 2008 B & B, 50 ton wrecker, w/side puller, 35,000 Lb winches, 2 - 35000 lb main boom winches, 50,000 lb under lift, 144" reach, aluminum wrecker body painted Viper red, mileage 807,000 approx.**



**New 25 Ton Jerr-Dan**

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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. Plantary 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**

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**2006 4300 INT. EXTENDED CAB 21 FT. CHEVRON, red in color, DT466, 6 speed, aluminum wheels, push bumper, mileage 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**

AC Cold/Price Reduced

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**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 and 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 riggers, Total weight 69,000 lbs. Whelan strobe bar light w/wings, dual exhaust, side hyd front outriggers.**



**3 Stage Boom SLIDER**

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**1999 NRC 40 TON SLIDER 3 STAGE, 1993 KW T-800 60" FLAT TOP SLEEPER 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**



**14 Ton Jerr-Dan wrecker**

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**2001 14 TON JERR-DAN, 1994 UNT. S8100, 300 CUMMINS 325 HP, 7 speed, mileage 300,000 approx., jake brake, AC cold, tires 70% approx., Great fuel mileage, 14 ton Jerrdan wrecker, 15,000 lb winches, 200 ft of cable, large bus bars and car L arms, All air hook ups, 215" wheelbase, 200 gallon fuel tanks, southern truck.**



**Century 4024 20 ton**

Cecil Wilson, broker  
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**2008 PETE 335 2008 CENTURY 4024 TON 330 HP cummins, 10 speed, air ride, 11,000 mileage approx., air seat, electric windows, CD, Aluminum wheels, Michelin tires, 33,000 gvw, all fork package and chains w/big L arms, Aluminum body, all air hookups.**



**25 ton Nomar**

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**2000 IHC 300 CAT, 9 SPEED, 33,000 GVW, aluminum wheels, rear tires new, front 50% approx., 500,000 miles approx. WB 220", 1994 25 ton No - sets of forks, 6000 lb L-arms, whelan light bar, 2 stage under reach, 96", new red and white paint, hyd spades, tractor and trailer air hook ups.**



**2004 M2 FREIGHTLINER 14 TON CENTURY 3 STAGE WHEEL LIFT,**

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**Mercedes, 8 speed Fuller, air brakes, mileage approx. 54516, tractor package, simulators, 22.5 tires, 60%, new silver and blue paint, 14 ton Century, 3 stage wheel lift, manual spades, big truck towbar, strobes front and rear fenders, 108 CA,**



**Century 5030, 30 ton PRICED REDUCED**

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**1984 359 PETE 91 CENTURY 5030 30 TON 425 HP cat, jake brake, 15 speed, 390 rear ratio, front tires new, rear 60%, aluminum wheels, Dual chrome stacks, 42" sleeper, 1991 Century 5030, 30 ton, 5 sets of forks, chains and receivers, spring hanger, Federal light bar, southern truck no rust.**



**35 Ton Challenger PRICE REDUCED**

Cecil Wilson, broker  
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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.**



**60 ton B&B rotator**

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**1998 PETE DAY CAB 2005 60 TON B&B ROTATOR, 550 HP cat, 40,000 miles on rebuilt, C-15 engine, 13 speed, rebuilt w/papers, 20,000 front axle, 40,000 rears, 24.5 virgin tires, floats on front 85% good, locking front axle, mileage 500,000 miles approx. 2005 60 ton B&B rotator, red color, 30 ft remote w/9 functions, flip down spades, 4 sets of forks, weighs 60,000 328" WB, deck winch.**



**50 TON ROTATOR**

Cecil Wilson, broker  
205-956-2852  
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**1990 PETE 377, 1990 50 TON ROTATOR 36" SLEEPER, 3406 - 425 cat, 13 speed, tri axle, air ride, 250,000 miles approx., rebuilt engine And transmission w/papers, color gray, GAWR 74,000 336" WB, Jake brake, triple framed, simulators, 8808 2 stage boom, 45,000 lb winches, hyd outriggers, rear spades, wheel lift reach 141" Remote w/tilt, tow chains, spring hangers, bus bars, and forks, all new lighting .**



**21 ft. Vulcan**

Cecil Wilson, broker  
205-956-2852  
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**2005 F650 EC, cummins automatic, white color, hyd brakes, 138,000 miles approx., gray cloth interior, 21 ft. Vulcan steel, removable rails, whelan bar light, 2 48" boxes, simulators, souther truck.**



**21 ft. Vulcan**

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**2003 C5500 21FT. VULCAN STEEL, white color, Duramax automatic, 155,000 miles approx., hyd brakes, charcoal interior cloth, simulators, 21 ft Vulcan steel, removeable rails, 2 - 48" boxes, Whelan strobe bar light.**



**750 Holmes**

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**1988 377 PETE 750 HOLMES ZACK 402-102" REACH, 425 HP 3406B cat, air ride, 60" flat top sleeper, aluminum wheels, 13 speed, 750 Holmes, Square booms, hyd spades, 402 Zac lift, cordless remote, dark gray in color. 102" Reach & 40,000 underlift**



**21 ft steel Vulcan AIR BRAKE**

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**2007 F650 BLACK, air brakes, cummins automatic, 145,000 miles approx., new simulators, 21 ft steel Vulcan, Removeable rails, 2 - 48" boxes, quarter fenders.**



**2008 Jerr-dan 50 ton**

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**2006 PETE 379L, 550 cat, 18 speed, 370 rear ratio, 397" WB, 20K steer axle, 20K pusher axle, backup camera, Onboard scales, 2008 Jerr-dan 50 ton wrecker 3 stage boom, two speed, 50K winches, 35K deck winch, coach underlift, 177" reach 50K rating.**



**2006 60 Ton Rotator**

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**2006 60 TON B&B ROTATOR, 1999 Peterbilt 379 3406 Cat 550 HP overhauled 200,000 miles back (no papers) 13 speed, 20,000 front axles, 40,000 rear axles, 340" WB, triple framed, approx mileage 895,668 2 stage boom, 33 ft long, 3 winches, 50,000 lbs each, 250 ft cable, wheel lift reach 130", 86 LED lights, 16 work lights, all new tires virgin Front floats, Michelin 24.5 tires, 5 sets of forks, runs perfect, dyno test if needed.**



**15,000lb Winches**

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**1995 LANDOLL 317 48 FEET, 3406 13 speed, air ride, unibilt sleeper, 230 WB, front tires new, rear 60% approx. 11-22.5 tires, black color, 1995 Landoll 317, 48 feet Landoll 102" wide, 15000 lb winch, good wood floor, tail board is Straight, new tires, 3 new cylinders, dock leveling, color white, new brakes and chambers.**



**20 ton Vulcan**

Cecil Wilson, broker  
205-956-2852  
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**2003 20 TON VULCAN 1997 MACK, engine E-454 Mack, rebuilt 6-26-07, 20,000 miles back, 10 speed fuller, mack rears, virgin tires 90% approx. 300" WB, milage 716,057 approx, 2003 20 ton Vulcan, 8 sets of forks, spring hangers, risers, chains and adapter, Safety chains, 5th wheel adapter w/king pin, bus bars, 2 snatch blocks.**



**1991 Century 20 Ton**

Cecil Wilson, broker  
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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 150000 miles back, current inspection, 1991 Century 20 ton, formula 3 lift, Double framed, 6000 lb L arms, 84" extention, 137 CA, 10,000 extended, forks, chains, truck tow bar.**



**21 ft. steel Vulcan**

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**2005 F650 STANDARD cab. Cummins automatic, 195,000 mileage approx., air compressor, hyd brakes, aluminum wheels, White in color, 21 ft. Vulcan steel, removable rails, 2 - 48" boxes,**



**Century 9055, 50 ton**

Cecil Wilson, broker  
205-956-2852  
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**1995 PETE 379, 475 E CAT, 1995 CENTURY 9055, 10 speed, jake, mileage 1,049,114 approx., engine overhauled, AC, 346" WB, 62" sleeper, Dual stacks, blue color air ride, front tires 90% approx., rears 50% w/aluminum wheels, IR 24.5 tires size, 50 ton, 2 stage boom, 50,000 lb plantary winch, 200 ft 3/4 cable, steel bed, spring hangers, Forks, 5th wheel & pintle w/chains, buss bars.**



**21 ft. steel Vulcan**

Cecil Wilson, broker  
205-956-2852  
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**2007 - 4300 WHITE COLOR, DT466, automatic w/park, 158,124 mileage approx., simulators, 21 ft. steel Vulcan, removable Rails, 2 - 48" boxes, Whelan strobe bar light, Southern truck.**



**21 ft. steel Jerr-Dan**

Cecil Wilson, broker  
205-956-2852  
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**2005 F650, 215 HP CUMMINS, automatic, white in color, simulators, mileage approx 176,000 cruise, CD, electric windows & locks, 21 Ft steel Jerr-dan w/Removeable rails, 2 - 24" tool boxes, southern truck**

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Includes facility services and high-visibility uniforms.



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