

Freight express that beats time

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WHEN you name your company Time Freight, you're firmly putting your reputation on the line for delivering on time.

Time Freight, a national express road freight business with headquarters in Pietermaritzburg, has a number of disciplines in place to enable it to serve effectively over 10 000 active accounts around the country.

Average speed, not top speed

Line-haul articulated rigs are restricted to the 80 km legal maximum speed. Distribution trucks under 9 000 kg gross vehicle mass (GVM) are legally allowed to travel at 120 km/h, but Time Freight limits them to 100 km/h. Speed costs fuel, maintenance and tyres, but above all, overspeeding leads to major accidents.

The 6 X 4 Man line-haul units are rated for 480 hp, but only operate with a payload of around 24 tons. This means that engine-load factors are reduced and engine torque holds well on inclines to maintain high average speeds with minimal fuel consumption. Compare this to most 480 hp truck tractors on our roads working to the maximum at 36 t payload and 56 t GCM.

A stickler for fuel consumption

Diesel fuel is a big factor when driving the 1,4 million kilometres



Time Freight, a national express road freight business with headquarters in Pietermaritzburg, uses 6x4 Man line-haul units that are rated for 480 hp but only operate with a payload around 24 tons to maintain high average speeds.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

that Time Freight covers every month. But while fuel is the number-one issue at the company, there's no need for anti-siphon devices on their tanks.

CEO Etienne van Ravesteyn explains: "We capture fuel consumption electronically for summation and trend breakdown, but we don't rely on computers for control. Fuel is our biggest operating cost and tells us everything, but it needs an immediate physical and urgent discipline for analysis and action. Fuel management is done per slip immediately after filling."

Loading is a science

Volume drives the operations at

Time Freight, but an average consignment weight of 42,5 kg is not easily handled. There's a science and sequence in loading and unloading that achieves volumetric efficiency without damaging goods in transit. Drivers take responsibility for loading and 20 t can be loaded in two-and-a-half hours.

New tyres minimise time lost

"New tyres only" is a Time Freight policy that has been in place for 25 years. National fleet manager Greg Fitzpatrick says that "because Time Freight runs on new tyres, we have adequate rubber to meet the road and we experience few on-road tyre failures that are hazardous at night.

Also, to limit new-tyre costs, we have negotiated a reasonable credit for a new-tyre carcass when it reaches the time for recapping. South Africa has a massive thirst for retread tyres and we supply this market."

Employ open communications

Having 349 drivers at Time Freight makes communications essential, but this can be costly. Trunking radio to base has proved to be more cost-efficient than cellphones and there's no limit on the number of calls made by or to drivers.

The Altech Netstar Power Track system tracks vehicle movement. Monitoring is executed 24/7.

Consignments must not only ar-

rive on time but also intact.

Minimise driver fatigue

Night operations have a statistical probability three to four times higher than daylight ops of being involved in a road accident. Time Freight's countermeasures include:

- 80 km/h restriction on all trunk routes, with two drivers per truck.
- Line-haul units are air conditioned and equipped with radio and CD players.
- Rest periods are strictly managed to promote driver freshness.
- Route rotation is carefully planned and managed to avoid boredom. Van Ravesteyn says: "We have specific policies and parameters in place to ensure overtime does not exceed acceptable levels."

Van Ravesteyn says: "Time Freight depots open before traditional business hours and close long after most competitors in the industry. Many entrenched procedures and systems support our dedication and culture to getting express freight delivered on time, every time."

As Albert Einstein said, time is the fourth dimension. Anything is measured in terms of height, width and breadth and to this we must finally add the elusive element of time.

In Africa, that's a challenge indeed — one that Time Freight has got right. — (reprinted with permission. *FleetWatch* 2009 November/December issue).

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