

WESTCAN BULK TRANSPORT QUICK TO MARKET

The trucking season in Canada is short. That's why Westcan Bulk Transport in Western Canada and the Northwest Territories has to move quickly. The Edmonton-based hauler must ship liquid fertilizer when farmers need it in the spring and fall. It also runs fuel and other commodities across the icy lakes of the Northwest Territories for as long as they stay frozen.

The company does that with a combination of experienced workers, accurate forecasts and dependable equipment from Mack Trucks, Inc.

"Our people understand how the business operates," said Mike Royer, vice president of fleet services for Westcan, in describing the company's success. Founded in 1964 Westcan hauls bulk fuel, acid, asphalt, propane, grain and anhydrous ammonia (liquid fertilizer) across Western Canada, everywhere from local service stations to the diamond mines north of Yellowknife, a 22-hour drive over roads made famous by the TV show "Ice Road Truckers". To do that Westcan uses a fleet of Mack® Pinnacle™ models and Super B combination trailers pulling 140,000 pounds (63,500 kilograms) at a time.

The people Royer refers to include Westcan drivers and managers. "They are very experienced. Most of our terminal managers have been around for 15-20 years. Everybody in management has started by driving trucks or working in the shop."

With volatile weather and an even more volatile economy, accurate forecasts are essential. "The economy here is related to oil fields and agriculture. Everybody at Westcan is in tune with what's going on in the industry. We talk to our customers, who get soil and weather reports, and forecast from that how much they'll need. They'll tell us how much equipment to have ready."

To meet those demands, Westcan purchased 70 Pinnacle sleeper and day cab models with 505-HP MP8 engines, ClearTech™ SCR systems and mDRIVE™ automated manual transmissions. Each rig is outfitted with a factory-installed positive air shutdown, a safety feature that stops the air flow to the engine if it detects airborne gas at an oilfield. The company has ordered another 100 Pinnacle models from Nortrax Inc. in Edmonton, with support from Nortrax in Alberta, Redhead Equipment in Saskatchewan and Pacific Coast Heavy Truck Group in Kamloops, British Columbia.

Royer likes the new fleet. The SCR system works well and the rigs are averaging a half mile per gallon better than the 2007 equipment. Drivers like the trucks, too, especially with mDRIVE. "They ride well, they're quiet. At first the drivers were apprehensive; they didn't think some machine could shift as well as they could. Now some of our more experienced drivers wish this was available sooner because it makes their job easier."

Best of all the trucks are on the highway. "They're getting used," Royer said. "There're not in the shop. They're out making money."



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