

(01/12/09)

## GREEN FLEET OF THE MONTH

### **Iowa fleet green and growing**

West Side Transport sees environmental initiatives as part of foundation for future

While many fleets are shrinking their businesses during this downturn, Iowa-based West Side Transport ([www.westsidetransport.com](http://www.westsidetransport.com)) is looking ahead to economic recovery and making plans accordingly. The dry-van carrier has about 465 drivers today and already counts some of the country's major retailers and manufacturers as customers, from Lowes stores to Proctor & Gamble, furniture manufacturer Hon, and Toyota forklifts. "We want to be ready to go when the economy begins to recover," says Sue Smith director of driver services for West Side Transport. "That means some carefully planned and managed growth even during the recession, and an emphasis on building a fuel efficient and environmentally responsible operation."

Part of their plan included becoming an EPA SmartWay partner, according to Smith. Today, West Side Transport has the highest SmartWay rating possible, a 1.25 "outstanding" score, entitling them to use the SmartWay logo. "We joined SmartWay about two years ago," she says. "We joined because we wanted to help protect the environment and because it just made good business sense to do what we could to reduce fuel consumption. True win/win opportunities like that don't come along every day. While we can't say for sure that we've earned new business because of SmartWay, we've enhanced many of our current business relationships, including with some of our largest accounts.

"We have also certainly improved our fleet's overall fuel efficiency, in part because of the SmartWay fleet guidelines," she adds. "Since 1985, we have improved our miles per gallon (MPG) by 8.4 percent. That translates into big dollars, given that our fuel bill for 2008 was more than \$28 million. In addition to equipment spec changes, we have lowered the governed speed on all our trucks to help maximize the MPG of every unit, and we constantly monitor our drivers' individual MPG, out-of-route miles and fuel purchasing habits, making suggestions for improvement."

West Side Transport currently operates almost all Cascadia and Columbia model Freightliner tractors. They are equipped with numerous fuel-conserving components, including Bandag Fuel Tech tires, side fairings and the highest R rating insulation. The new Cascadia chassis feature Espar Heaters ([www.espar.com](http://www.espar.com)) for no-idle warmth and the ClimaCab AC system from Glacier Bay ([www.glacierbay.com](http://www.glacierbay.com)) for cooling. The Espar under-bunk heaters run on small sips of diesel, while the ClimaCab AC system is powered by four deep-cycle Absorbed Glass Mat batteries operated through a power management system for zero-emissions cooling. The company also pays for drivers to use Idle Aire facilities during the warm months so that drivers who do not yet have the new ClimaCab AC system installed in their trucks can still have access to no-idle cooling.

“We also have 30 new trucks with the Detroit Diesel DD15 engine,” says Smith. “Those trucks can even idle in California because their net emissions are so low. Each DD15 truck has a decal on the hood to signify that the truck is permitted to idle.”

Not all the benefits of the company’s environmental initiatives are easy to translate into dollars, Smith notes. “There are also things that benefit the company that cannot be put into numbers,” she says, “driver satisfaction and appreciation for one. We have a lot of eco-minded drivers at West Side Transport who comment all the time to our fuel manager that they appreciate having trucks that they do not have to idle, but that are still comfortable to work and sleep in. As new green products are made available, West Side Transport will continue to implement as made changes as are economically possible.” -----Wendy Leavitt