

Excel Transportation: An Early Lesson Proves Profitable

Excel Transportation's Vic Martin first learned about environmentally-friendly practices before the phrase was even coined. Martin says it all goes back to his childhood.

"I grew up with a father who was a farmer at heart. He was always looking at maximizing the value of items by fixing them, re-using them or even recycling them when possible," says Martin. "It's that ideal that influences many of the decisions we make at Excel today and it's amazing how closely that mantra dovetails with the push to a more environmentally-friendly industry."

The regional carrier runs 82 tractors, dozens of lease operators and almost 300 trailers and Martin admits he's continually looking for ways to improve the bottom line. He and his staff are regulars at Green Fleets BC workshops, as well as other industry meetings and conferences, eager to stay on top of the latest technologies, modifications and practices. Martin says every time someone from the company comes back from an event, they are full of ideas they want to apply to Excel operations.



The list of initiatives the Prince George-based company has already put in place is a long one; they run from the seemingly simple to technically complex and all of them help reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, save fuel or, in some cases, both.

All Excel tractors are equipped with:

- smaller engines with less horsepower than the standard tractor but that are more efficient, leading to fuel savings of up to 8 per cent;
- GPS units that track data including location and speed;
- speed limiters to prevent tractors from being driven over 102 kilometres an hour, preventing inefficient fuel usage;
- idle limiters that shut the rig down to prevent the wasting of fuel and needless carbon emissions from excessive idling;
- full aerodynamic packages to decrease wind resistance and increase fuel efficiency; and
- re-treaded tire casings that can get up to 800,000 kilometres of usage instead of the traditional 200,000 kilometres.

One modification that stands out for me is the move to lower wattage block and oil pan heaters,” says Martin. “Even though I have to explain to manufacturers over and over the heaters that come standard are far too powerful even for our northern BC climate, I’m willing to fight that battle because the lower wattage heaters have helped us reduce our power usage by almost 40 per cent.”

What’s next for Excel? Martin and other senior members of the team are looking at bringing in wide-base tires for the fleet. While he isn’t quite sold on them yet, he says the wide-base tires appear to be safer, offer greater fuel efficiency and have fewer parts, which should result in less wear and tear, and lower maintenance costs.

“We don’t always look at new technologies in terms of their environmentally-friendly aspects,” says Martin, “but it seems helping the environment by going with smaller engines that lower our fuel consumption and reduce GHG emissions goes hand in hand with saving money right now.”