Estes Express Lines Drives Fuel Economy Improvement with Kenworth T680s

RICHMOND, Va. – For one of the country’s major motor freight carriers, incremental improvements in fuel economy can make a huge difference.

Estes Express Lines was founded in 1931 by W.W. Estes as a small, local trucking business hauling farm produce and supplies in southern Virginia. Today, the family-owned and operated company has become one of the fastest growing multi-regional, less-than-truckload and truckload transportation systems in the United States. Its trucks annually travel 450 million miles and transport nearly 10 million tons of cargo.

Michael Palmer, vice president of fleet services for Estes Express Lines, is shown with one of the company’s Kenworth T680s.

To help realize greater fuel efficiency, Estes Express has ordered a total of 420 Kenworth T680s – including some with the PACCAR MX-13 engine – in the past year. “Fuel economy is important to us. Every tenth of a mile-per-gallon improvement in fuel economy can deliver huge potential savings for our company,” said Michael Palmer, vice president of fleet services for Estes Express Lines.

For its Kenworth T680s in service, Estes Express Lines is working together with Kenworth through its local Kenworth dealer Truck Enterprises - Richmond to realize results much greater than an incremental improvement. “We’re seeing positive results with the T680s equipped with the PACCAR MX-13 engines compared to the performance of the trucks they replaced,” Palmer said.

Last year, the company took delivery of 80 Kenworth T680 day cabs with single axles. Positive fuel efficiency results from operating those T680s, along with support from Truck Enterprises, convinced Estes to order 340 more Kenworth T680s this year. Of those, 175 are T680 single-axle day cabs, and 165 are tandem-axle T680 76-inch sleepers equipped with lower and upper bunks and the new Kenworth Idle Management System.

Besides a desire to save on fuel costs through improved fuel efficiency, Palmer said there are several other reasons why Estes chose to buy Kenworth T680s, such as providing drivers a comfortable work environment and maintaining the company’s image.

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“When the Kenworth T680s with the 76-inch sleepers with the Kenworth Idle Management System are delivered, we’ll be looking for even greater reductions in fuel consumption,” Palmer added. “But just as important, we’ll be providing our drivers an idle-free way to keep cool while they’re waiting for loads at depots or resting. Providing a comfortable work environment for our drivers is important.”

The optional Kenworth Idle Management System for the Kenworth T680 76-inch sleeper offers a battery-based auxiliary power unit (APU) system for air conditioning that is tied directly into the Kenworth T680’s ducting system. An optional fuel-fired heater provides full engine-off heating capability.

“Our drivers seem pleased with the T680’s responsiveness and the ease of shifting the 10-speed manual transmission and its air-assisted hydraulic clutch,” Palmer added. “Plus, Kenworth provides our drivers equipment that represents our company well. A Kenworth is something they’re proud to drive.”

Estes Express Lines uses various strategies in deciding how long to keep trucks and run them before selling them or turning them into dealers, Palmer said. The strategies depend on a variety of factors including operating costs and equipment reliability and durability, operational needs and resale values. “We’re looking forward to taking advantage of Kenworth’s traditional high resale value,” concluded Palmer.

Kenworth Truck Company is the manufacturer of The World’s Best® heavy and medium duty trucks. Kenworth's Internet home page is at www.kenworth.com. Kenworth is a PACCAR company.