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**Safety Council  
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**Total safety  
at Trimac**

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A dedication to safety that spans more than five decades earned the 2003 NTTC Outstanding Performance Trophy for Trimac Transportation Services Inc, Calgary AB, Canada. Since the 1960s, the company motto has been Service with Safety.

# Total safety

*Trimac addresses every facet of tank truck safety with its award-winning program*

**By Charles E Wilson**

**S**AFETY permeates virtually every decision-making activity at Trimac Transportation Services Inc, North America's second largest tank truck carrier. This total approach to safety has been instrumental in the 57-year-old company's success. It is truly an award-winning effort.

The most recent safety accolades came from National Tank Truck Carriers Inc (NTTC). This year, the Calgary, Alberta, Canada-based tank fleet became the 54<sup>th</sup> winner of NTTC's Outstanding Performance Trophy. The carrier also earned the Grand Award in the "Over 100 Million Miles Class" of NTTC's Competitive Safety Contest, the Honor Award for the same mileage category in the Personnel Safety Contest, and a 10-year safety improvement certificate. Marcel Pouliot, Trimac vice-president of safety services and security, was named NTTC Safety Director of the Year.

"We've always prided ourselves on a safety-first focus," says Jeff McCaig, Trimac president and chief executive officer. "The NTTC awards are recognition that we are achieving that objective. The award certainly reinforces our core values.

"We believe that the Outstanding Performance Trophy helps demonstrate to our customers that they have a premier partner in the transportation of their bulk cargoes. It helps in making Trimac a preferred place to work for our employees. Finally, the award competition raises the bar for safety across the tank truck industry."

Pouliot adds that he feels very honored that Trimac was recognized as the best in a safety competition with its peers. The award also spotlights the hard work and dedication to safety by all of the employees and independent contractors at Trimac.

"It's hard for any large tank truck carrier to win the NTTC Outstanding

Performance Trophy," he says. "This award is even more meaningful when viewed from an overall North American perspective. North America presents a demanding safety environment. Any fleet operating throughout the United States and Canada has a high accident exposure."

When asked what it means to be the first Canadian carrier to win the NTTC Outstanding Performance Trophy, McCaig responded: "We don't think of ourselves as a Canadian carrier. We're a North American fleet, with more than half of our business in the United States, and our head office could be anywhere. The Canadian and US economies are increasingly integrated, and we are part of that. In time, Mexico also will become part of a seamless North American market."

## **Long history**

Trimac's status today as a North American bulk carrier is a far cry from

the company's official start in 1946 in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, as Maccam Transport. Founding partners were Jack McCaig and Al Cameron. The company adopted the Trimac name in 1960.

Like so many trucking industry pioneers, Jack McCaig started with a single truck, and a second-hand one at that. Today is a much different story. The fleet has grown to 3,000 tractors and 6,000 trailers operating out of 135 terminals, called branches. Sixty-eight of the branches have maintenance shops, and 34 include wash racks. Approximately 4,400 people work for the company, which generated revenues totaling \$440.1 million in 2002.

With its extensive transport infrastructure, Trimac serves a diverse customer base. Commodities hauled include chemicals, petroleum, asphalt, cement, fly ash, lime, plastics, wood chips, compressed gases, and edibles.

While much has changed at the company over the years, the safety emphasis was apparent from the very start. The company adopted its motto "Service with Safety" in 1960 with the acquisition of H M Trimble & Sons Ltd, a Calgary petroleum hauler.

"In our company, safety provides the context for all other performance factors," Jeff McCaig says. "Safety is the first item on the agenda at our quarterly operations reviews. In addition, every manager is responsible for communicating the importance of safety to the other employees. The human element is always the key to safety. We want to make sure that every employee returns home safely at the end of every shift or trip.

"Our team members realize that even the smallest safety factor is important, and success comes from doing a lot of little things well. It's these efforts that have made this company the safest in the tank truck industry."

### Safety value

Management works hard to show customers the value of a good safety program. "We begin by explaining that the lowest rate isn't necessarily the lowest cost of service," McCaig says. "Once they understand that, safety becomes a selling point. We've benefited because we work with some traffic managers whose bonuses are based at least in part on safe



Jeff McCaig stands with the NTTC Outstanding Performance Trophy for tank fleet safety.

shipments. Unfortunately, there isn't enough of this type of incentive in the shipper community."

As a Responsible Care partner, Trimac shows its customers how safety fits with the overall need for quality service. "Quality and safety have a natural relationship, and they are both focused on process and people," says Barry Davy, Trimac senior vice-president. "It's hard to differentiate between the two. In both cases, we follow a policy of 'trust, but verify.' We use root cause analysis to examine system variations and failures."

The carrier developed its own quality management system called Field Operations Xcellence (FOX). "We've incorporated our safety and other operating and financial processes together to recreate the way we run the truck line," Davy says.

Safety and security are continually evolving at Trimac to address the latest industry concerns. In fact, safety and security operations were thoroughly reorganized over the past two years to ensure even quicker response. The objective was to improve the safety support for the branches and rely

more on the branch management.

Today, Trimac's safety and security executives function more as coaches and facilitators. "We see no place for a safety dictator," Davy says. "It's inconsistent with today's business principles and our management practices."

This attitude is clearly demonstrated by the safety management team that Trimac has assembled. Working with Pouliot are two very skilled, very experienced safety directors. Neil Voorhees is the director of safety services and security for the United States, and Len Comtois is his counterpart in Canada.

Pouliot and his two directors provide guidance, but they don't micromanage the safety effort. "Our philosophy is that you don't manage safety," he says. "You manage operations safely. To do that, we've found that we have to rely more heavily on the front-line traffic supervisors. They set the tone. They build each move for the customers, and they select the driver and equipment. They check compliance. They have the most face time with the drivers, and they know about the personal and work issues. We can't emphasize enough that safety management is a face-to-face activity."

### Safety workshops

To ensure that traffic supervisors impact safety in a positive way, Trimac conducted a series of two-day safety workshops in 2002. The workshop theme was "Managing operations safely." More than 200 traffic supervisors attended the six workshops (three of which were in Canada and three in the United States).

Each workshop began with a safety test. "We found out that some of our traffic supervisors weren't totally familiar with all elements of our common safety goals," Pouliot says. "There is no question that these workshops have made a difference. They provided a way to reinforce with the traffic supervisors how important they are to the safety process."

During one exercise, traffic supervisors were divided into groups of five to eight. Their objective was to develop a branch safety program from scratch.

### Branch programs

The insight gained from that and other workshop drills is being put to



Marcel Pouliot was named NTTC safety director of the year.

work throughout the Trimac system. Branches set their own safety goals for the year based on current trends and corporate goals. One of Trimac's 13 safety services managers assists in setting the goals and works with the branch to achieve them. Both the branch manager and safety services manager are accountable for the results.

In addition to informal reinforcement of the safety message on a daily basis, branch managers are expected to hold at least quarterly safety meetings for drivers. A majority of the branches schedule monthly meetings, and the dedicated petroleum locations hold weekly meetings because of the drivers' work schedules. Regular toolbox meetings are conducted for wash rack and maintenance employees.

When accidents and incidents do occur, branch managers follow a fact-finding process that looks for the root cause. An incident report is sent out for review by Trimac's executive group. The fact-finding process is designed to prevent incidents from recurring and has driven a significant amount of safety improvement.

Branch managers have plenty of corporate assistance in carrying out their safety objectives. In addition to monthly conference calls with all of the branches, the corporate safety team is available as a resource to help solve specific problems.

Working with Learning Management Systems, the company has begun developing computer-based training modules for the branches. The first module covered Canada's new Dangerous Goods Transport regulations. The carrier was able to train 1,600 drivers in just six weeks last year.

"The LMS process gives us the means to develop consistent computer-based training," Pouliot says. "We can incorporate video into these programs. We're now developing customer-specific training, and our human resources group has a drug and alcohol supervisory certification program on LMS. As



**Trimac has been testing the Bendix night vision system on some of its tractors as a way to prevent collisions with animals.**

valuable as the LMS modules may be, though, they won't replace instructors and one-on-one training in our system."

#### **Decision driving**

One-on-one training during 2002 included a special campaign to put all drivers through a decision driving program. Modeled on the Liberty Mutual Decision Driving program, the objective of the training was working with drivers to identify and change bad habits as part of Trimac's behavior-based safety initiative.

"All of us have a disconnect in the way we think we drive and what we actually do on the road," Voorhees says. "We know we hit a nerve with this training from the feedback we received and because many of our drivers have passed it on to family members. That suggests it had a major impact on them."

Drivers also are receiving individual instruction on setting mirrors correctly, and this is credited with reducing stationary impacts. "Instructors help each driver find the optimal mirror setting," Voorhees says. "When mirrors are set

and used properly, a driver's field of vision significantly improves."

Product-specific safety information is included in the product stewardship manuals that are provided to each branch. Trimac has a manual for each commodity hauled, and the manuals were written by drivers, for drivers. Safety information is highlighted in the Interline, Trimac's monthly employee newsletter.

Trimac executives try to stay in touch with the front lines by visiting as many branches as possible during the course of the year. Part of the reason is to reinforce the safety message. "From January to April this year, we've visited more than a dozen branches," McCaig says. "We do a lot of driving trips. We meet with drivers whenever we're at a branch. That's the way this company has always been run."

#### **High expectations**

With the amount of support available, branches are expected to perform. Safety is high on the list of factors that are checked through annual audits. Branches also receive a six-month followup safety audit.

"As part of the audit process, we do trend analysis at each branch," Pouliot says. "This tool gives us the ability to detect specific safety problems at a branch. We're able to track every safety deviation."

On the balanced scorecard, safety and compliance account for about 35% of the total score. Other factors include customer satisfaction, financial performance, and employee metrics.

Locations that fall short, especially in safety, are designated as focus branches. All of the branches that are in-

**This dry bulker train has been fitted with the Bellseng Pressure Lock manhole lids that are opened and closed from the ground. The Bellseng system has become part of the comprehensive fall-protection program that Trimac initiated in 1992.**



cident free (based on preventable incidents) are recognized for their achievements. Trimac holds about 150 safety recognition events every year, according to McCaig.

The very best of the branches receive the President's Safety Award. Each year, this award goes to four branches—two in Canada and two in the United States. In each country, the carrier recognizes a branch accumulating less than 1.5 million miles and one over that mileage.

### Vehicle specifications

Safety management at Trimac goes well beyond training and rewards. Corporate safety officials are members of the Equipment Standards Committee. They make sure that safety plays a prominent role in the tractor and trailer specification process where applicable.

A key decision in 1992 was to put fall protection on all new tank trailers even before Canadian law mandated such systems. Trimac standardized on a fold-down railing system that is now in its fourth generation. Activated from the ground, the railing adds about 100 pounds to a trailer at a cost of about \$1,000.

"Our fall protection system has gotten a lot of attention in the industry," Pouliot says. "It was the right thing to do. As long as we have people going on top of tanks, we need to ensure that they have the best means of protection."

More recently, Trimac took a different approach to prevent falls from dry bulk trailers. The idea is to keep drivers completely off these trailers. The carrier is doing this with the Bellseng Pressure Lock Lid, which is distributed by Solimar Pneumatics.

The Bellseng kit consists of an aluminum alloy pressure lock lid, weather cap, pneumatic actuating cylinders, gas-



Trimac has been installing fold-down fall-protection railings on its tank trailers since 1992. Lowering the bottom rung of the ladder raises the railing.

kets, and control panel. Operated from the ground, the system weighs about 90 pounds.

"Fall protection is important, but we're just as interested in preventing other injuries," says Bill Januszewski, Trimac director of purchasing and equipment technical services. "Looking at both trailers and tractors, we're addressing a wide range of ergonomic factors, such as bending and stooping. Step placement is a concern.

"In all of this, we want to work with suppliers that welcome a team approach to equipment design and configuration. These are proactive companies, and they get our business."

In its drive to run the safest fleet in the industry, Trimac is working with some leading-edge technologies. For in-



As part of the safety program, trailers that are out of service are clearly marked by an adhesive label that can't be easily removed.



Satellite tracking is getting more attention at Trimac due to heightened concerns about hazmat security.

stance, 30 tractors have been fitted with Bendix night vision systems in an effort to prevent collisions with animals.

The carrier is evaluating electronic braking systems from MeritorWABCO, and it has standardized on six-channel antilock braking. "With sensors in each wheel, we feel we get better braking control and more stability," Januszewski says.

Greater stability is the reason Trimac began specifying MeritorWABCO's ABS with roll stability control. The system helps protect against rollover by automatically applying the vehicle brakes.

Mirrors continue to get a lot of attention on tractors. Trimac believes tractors should have side mirrors with convex bases and left and right fender mirrors. The left fender mirror is most important on tractors making city deliveries.

In addition to tests with the new electronic engines, Trimac is running Eaton AutoShift transmissions in a growing number of tractors. "We did a cost-bene-



Trimac has its own tag system for trailers with nitrogen blankets.



Stroke indicators (the yellow device) alert drivers to the need for brake adjustment.



Tank hardware on chemical trailers includes Girard vapor recovery valves and pressure-relief vents.



Groenveld's automatic lube system has extended preventive maintenance intervals for tractors and trailers. Trimac also hopes to increase tire life with the Meritor Tire Inflation System by PSI.

fit analysis, and the results showed that the AutoShift works well with less-experienced drivers," Januszewski says. "They are able to concentrate on driving safely rather than struggling with a manual transmission."

#### Security concerns

Security has become a greater concern, both from an equipment and safety standpoint. Several tractors have been equipped with Qualcomm satellite tracking units, because chemical cus-

tomers now must be notified of vehicle and driver details.

Most of the security procedures now in place were developed and implemented by the corporate safety team. Managers, supervisors, and drivers have been thoroughly trained in the company's security procedures, and they now carry photo identification badges.

Emergency preparedness plays a role in both security and safety, and 36 Trimac employees went through the 40-

hour hazardous materials response course at the Transportation Technology Center Inc (TTCI) in Pueblo, Colorado, in 2002. Trimac now has about 50 TTCI-trained emergency responders.

"In every way possible, we want to position our safety program as the best in the industry," McCaig says. "We're proactive. We believe every accident, every injury is preventable." □

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*Invested in your journey.*

Every day, all 5,000 members of the Trimac family set the highest standards for performance and safety. A benchmark that is recognized across the transportation industry. We have carefully designed and implemented several new processes to build on our longstanding attention to safety. For more information about Trimac's safety initiatives, please contact us at 800-677-4504 or visit [www.trimac.com](http://www.trimac.com). At Trimac, safety is no accident.