



As a bulk carrier operating in the western United States and Canada, Apex Logistics LLC faces challenging operating conditions every day. The hauler of non-hazardous commodities, including liquid and dry chemicals and all types of construction materials, for example, routinely fields equipment carrying high-center-of-gravity loads on steep grades.

The result, notes Mike Siebert, director of maintenance at Apex, is a dedicated commitment to safety that is reflected throughout the operation. “We strive for zero

defects in all activities related to each and every load we deliver,” he says.

Apex Logistics offers a wide range of bulk services from its base in Adelanto, Calif., and from terminals in Bakersfield and Fontana, Calif., as well as in Las Vegas, Nev., and Tyler, Texas. Its services include contract and dedicated transportation of dry bulk, non-hazardous liquid commodities between points in the U.S. and Canada, plus intrastate services in California, Arizona and Nevada.

Apex Logistics Trailer Specifications

Models: Beall Trailer (Double Pneumatic); Heil Trailer (Semi Pneumatic)

Landing Gear: Binkley

Axles: Meritor

Oil Seals: CR

Brakes: Meritor

ABS: Meritor WABCO

Automatic Slack Adjusters: Meritor

Tires: Goodyear G316

Lighting & Electrical: Truck-Lite LED

Different categories of commodities are transported by Apex. Liquids include feed molasses, calcium chloride, and magnesium chloride and cotton oil. Many types of chemicals are hauled, such as limestone, soda ash, borax, salt cake, fertilizers, industrial sands, manganese, ore and gypsum. Construction materials include cement, fly ash, hydrated and quicklime.

No accidents

Due to the type of equipment it operates and its operating territory, Siebert notes, rollover accidents were a particular problem for the Apex fleet. “Until 2005, we were averaging three rollovers a year,” he says. “In August 2004 we took part in a demonstration of Meritor Wabco’s Roll Stability Control system and were impressed with the way it performed. We’ve ordered it on every tractor since then and have not had a single rollover accident.”

With a trade cycle set at 600,000 miles, about three fourths of the Apex fleet of Freightliner tractors is now equipped with Meritor Wabco Roll Stability Control (RSC) systems. The percentage grows with each new power unit that Apex adds to its operation. “It’s a standard specification for us,” Siebert states. “We won’t spec a tractor without it.”

Meritor Wabco RSC is part of the manufacturer’s SmartTrac family of stability products that

also includes anti-lock braking systems (ABS) and Automatic Traction Control (ATC) and Electronic Stability Control (ESC) solutions. The factory-installed electronic stability control system for Class 8 tractors uses the same electronic controls as the ABS to continually monitor the vehicle's center of gravity, wheel speed and lateral acceleration limit, or rollover threshold.

When RSC identifies a potential rollover, and there is no input from the driver; it produces a warning on the dash and automatically reduces engine torque, engages the engine retarder, and applies the drive axle and trailer brakes to slow the vehicle.

Frequently, RSC activation takes place before the driver is aware of the need. "The monitoring, intervention, and warning sequence can give our drivers the split-second they need to maintain control of the vehicle," Siebert says. "RSC is always on and we don't have to teach drivers how to use the system. Instead, we can focus our training on what causes rollovers and how to anticipate those conditions."

Extending value

RSC also integrates with the Qualcomm mobile communications systems on Apex tractors, providing the fleet's management team with an advantage. "Being able to monitor hard braking and RSC applications while the truck is on the road," Siebert explains, "extends the value of our mobile communications investment and gives managers better visibility into vehicle and driver performance."

In practice, RSC integrates with the mobile communications system, which records a hard braking application or potential rollover situation and automatically sends an alert to the fleet's managers. "We can respond to unsafe driving behaviors right away," Siebert states, "and use the vehicle location reports and sensor data during training. For example, we can plot critical events on a map and point out things like an off ramp that might be a potential trouble spot. It's a great tool for managers and drivers alike."

For Siebert, RSC is also an affordable technology that quickly delivered a return on the fleet's investment.

"Combined with a concentrated driver training effort," he says, "our investment in RSC on all new tractors since 2005 has produced a 50% reduction in workers' compensation, physical damage and liability insurance, and we've reduced our accident rate by 75% over the last six years.

Apex Logistics Tractor Specifications

Model: Freightliner Cascadia

Wheelbase: 158 in.

Engine: Detroit Diesel DD15

Clutch: Eaton Fuller Solo

Transmission: Eaton Fuller AutoShift

Driveline: Meritor

Front Axle: Meritor 12,000-lb.; taper leaf suspension

Power Steering: TRW Ross

Rear Axle: Meritor RT-40-145, 3.58 ratio

Rear Suspension: Freightliner Airliner

Wheel Seals: CR Scotseal Plus

Brakes: Meritor Q Plus; 15X4 steer, 16.5X7 drive

ABS: Meritor WABCO, with Traction Control

Automatic Slack Adjusters: Meritor

Parking Brakes: Haldex Gold Seal

Wheels: Accuride aluminum

Tires: Goodyear G395 steer, G305 drive

5th Wheel: Fontaine No-Slack 7000

Air Compressor: Meritor WABCO 15.5 CFM

Air Dryer: Bendix AD-IS

Air Cleaners: Donaldson

Fan Clutch: Horton

Starter: Delco

Alternator: Delco 36-SI

Lighting: LED

Seats: Sears

Fuel Tank: 140-gal.

“We attribute a large part of that success to RSC,” Siebert adds, “and our drivers like that we’re investing in the latest technology to help them manage the truck and stay safe on the road. It’s an essential part of our safety program.”



Mike Siebert, director of maintenance

Guiding force

Mike Siebert, the company’s director of maintenance since 1998, has worked for Apex Bulk Commodities and Apex Logistics for 36 years. He became maintenance manager in 1978. Today, he oversees a maintenance operation that includes full-service company shops at four terminals and a staff of 12 mechanics, three welders and two tire changers, three clerks and seven truck washers.

Dedicated to excellence in his role, Siebert has completed a variety of fleet management training classes offered by the California Trucking Association (CTA) and currently takes part in

several different industry organizations on a regular basis, including the CTA council, which named him Maintenance Professional of the Year in 2008. This year, Siebert organized the first CTA Super Tech Competition for the State of California, which raised enough money to send the winner to the TMC Super Tech Competition this month.

Siebert also takes part in the San Bernardino Valley (SBV) College Transportation Council and the Distribution Management Association council. At the Cal State San Bernardino Leonard Transportation Center, he hosts the annual So Cal Transportation Logistic Summit. The educational and economic fundraiser attended by 400 to 600 people per year supports diesel technician programs at SBV.