

Tips From A Top Fleet on . . . SAFE BRAKES



SECOND INTERVIEW OF A SERIES:

Question: "As a large over-the-road fleet, covering the entire Eastern part of the U.S., you have an excellent safety record—and correspondingly low insurance rates. Why?"

Answer: "Because safety is important to us. Not only do we wish to protect lives, but with the high cost of insurance, a good safety record determines how much profit we're going to make."

Question: "You give your tractors and trailers a routine inspection about every 3000 miles—and a major overhaul about every 100,000 miles. What do you do that some fleets don't?"

Answer: "We give them a complete overhaul . . . and inspect them thoroughly whenever they're in the shop."

Question: "How does that affect the brake system?"

Answer: "Everything's completely overhauled, the cam bushings, the diaphragms, and all. We check all bushings, pull-back springs, and the springs in the diaphragms. If new cams are needed, we put them in, and check them every 3000 miles."

"Some fleets don't check their diaphragms and springs when they overhaul a job. They leave the old diaphragms in till they leak! We pull them!"

Question: "What would you advise them to do?"

Answer: "If a tractor or a trailer needs brakes, it's bound to have

something else wrong. So you might as well start from scratch. On brakes—start from the bottom up. Check your air. Tear them apart—replace rusty springs and diaphragms."

Question: "How would you sum that up?"

Answer: "Put it back the way it was when you bought it!"

Question: "Is it important to keep brake systems balanced?"

Answer: "Yes! Some men will pull the diaphragm off—and find that a spring's broken . . . and they'll put one spring in it. Now that's wrong! You'll get all your braking on the rest of the wheels and that one will be off. You'll wear out one lining faster than another."

Question: "Do you need a balance between tractor and trailer?"

Answer: "Sure, otherwise you're braking your trailer (for example) all the time . . . until your trailer brakes are gone . . . and sliding your tires all the time on the trailer."

"With balanced units (same-sized diaphragms and everything) you save on tires and you save on general wear. You save on everything—and most of all, you increase safety."

Question: "What about brake lining?"

Answer: "It's important! We try to get the best we can for the money."

Question: "What about drums?"

Answer: "If the drum is worn any amount, over so many miles, we replace the drum whether it's broken or not. We don't grind them. We buy new drums because it doesn't cost much more than to remachine old ones. And a remachined drum might still have cracks in it. We replace in sets . . . linings . . . drums . . . springs, etc."

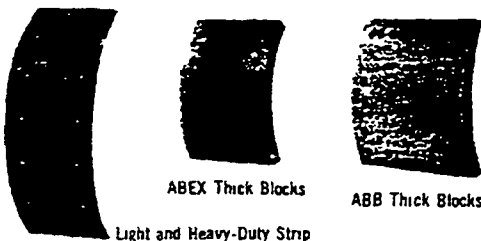
Question: "How important are drivers in 'over-all' brake safety?"

Answer: "Very important. We train them, and we keep a constant check on them. All tractors have a 24-hour electric clock that records everything—speed—mileage. We check these daily and keep the records for six months. We also have safety men on the road. They have radar, two-way radio and telephones—all the latest electronic controls to make sure our drivers live up to our policy of safe driving practices."

Question: "How would you sum up your ideas on maintenance and safety?"

Answer: "You spend money on maintenance in order to save money in the long run. And it really pays off. We'd be out of business if we didn't do a good job. Regular inspections and a complete job are what really count. We know that when a tractor or trailer goes out . . . it's right!"

As a service to fleet operators—in the interest of safety—American Brakeblok presents a confidential interview with a Top Fleet Maintenance Executive. Names are withheld to protect the fleet and the executive. Reprints of this Field Report are available from American Brakeblok. Ask for Field Report No. 361.



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