

# The Rock Solid News

LITTLE ROCK FARM *Trucking*

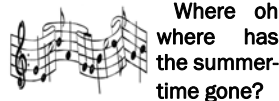
## Marks Message - Long Term Weather Forecast...Winter!

### Special points of interest:

- LRFT Special Offer
- Chicken Haulers Job Responsibilities
- Company Benefits
- Bye Bye Birdie
- Speeding
- Playing & Paying Fair
- Can't Plead Ignorance

### Ray Pennington's Random Thoughts

Everybody's good for something, even if they set a horrible example... A good scare teaches more than good advice... If we're bored with life, why do we want immortality... Men should stop trying to understand women, and just enjoy having them around... Many kids are spoiled because you can't spank a grandmother.... Judges injure the good when they spare the bad... Maybe experience isn't worth what it costs, but you can't get it any cheaper... There's no family tree without some sap...



Where oh where has the summertime gone?

Here it is, September, kids are back to school and I've noticed leaves turning color on the odd tree! Its hard to believe, but soon we'll be wearing muck lucks and mittens!

Gearing up for winter operations is very much on the minds of the maintenance department. Having the trucks prepared for cold weather reduces costly roadside calls, keeps customers and drivers happy, and keeps the revenue rolling in. A truck stopped on the side of the road benefits no one.

Drivers too must become aware of the changes needed ensuring they are prepared for winter driving.

Here's a few things I've learned from experience:

#### First Snow/Ice

That first snow and ice is

always the worst. It's the most dangerous for a few reasons. The ground isn't fully frozen yet. When precipitation hits the surface its slipperier than buttered escargot! The other reason to be extra cautious of first snow and freezing temperatures is other vehicles on the road. Remember, you are the professional! Understand many others out on the highways are not professionals! Take the necessary precautions like leaving extra room and watching far ahead up the road giving the few extra seconds needed to respond to traffic changes.

#### Jake Brake

Be careful when using the engine brake in the winter months. Many have been taken by surprise when they throw the engine brake to find the tractor comes around on them! Jake brakes will lock up the drives on slippery roads! Be forewarned!

#### Clothing/Gear

Like any mechanical equipment, new or used,

equipment can break down. Be prepared with winter clothing including a winter hat gloves and boots. Make sure you have a strong flashlight with a healthy batteries. Remember to carry an assortment of tools! A driver with tools makes all the difference when a small fix job can get them out of a very dangerous winter time situation!

Rather than dreading those winter months ahead, try changing your mindset. Anybody can drive straight down a dry paved road! Its takes a real professional with skills and smarts to maneuver heavy equipment in a way that's safe for both equipment and driver. Out-thinking adverse road conditions is a challenge giving great satisfaction when the job is done right!

If you need any advice on winter preparedness, your dispatcher will make sure you are put in touch with someone who can help!

**Drive Safe...Drive Smart**

## Correction: Letter of Thanks To Chicken Haulers

I took opportunity to thank USA Chicken Haulers for their patience with the problems with the catching crew.

What I didn't realize is how many local and Canadian chicken haulers were involved due to the time

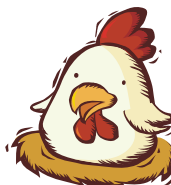
issues that were created. Ann's crew did an amazing job of meeting USA Drivers at switch points to make deliveries go on time.

It was our entire chicken

hauling team that made it all work out.

Sorry for my error.

Michael



## Playing & Paying Fair

There's been a topic bouncing around in my mind for the last several months but unsure whether it was newsletter worthy. But I will take a chance anyway.

Like all my blogs, they are based on past experiences that change my ways of thinking. Let me back up for a moment...

I used to work for a courier company in the customer service call centre. Taking hundreds of phone calls a day. It wasn't a big company, only about 50 drivers. We did about 10,000 shipments in a two week period. The drivers paychecks would be printed with almost 400 lines of data... multiple pages. It was hard to read.

The drivers were owner operators. It was their car, their gas, and their time. They were paid commissions based on their level of speed.

### The Problem

The company was so busy that we would have 2.5 hours to pick up and deliver packages. Dispatchers would be so cramped for time, drivers would receive orders late... arrive at the customer late, and deliver late. It happened frequently.

If the customer called to complain, the call centre would downgrade a \$25.00 shipment to \$8.00. Due to drivers being paid commissions, though they completed their assignments in a timely fashion, the company was considered late. The downgrading to the \$8.00 caused drivers to not be paid their \$15.00 but were actually paid \$4.80. If we free billed the shipment due to really seriously late, the driver would not be paid even though they completed the work.

Being part of the call centre, we never seen the impact of downgrading or free billing shipments.

### Eyes Wide Open

I moved over to the payroll area and seeing drivers paychecks. When a shipment was free billed, the lines of it never appeared on the driver's pay. They did this so it wouldn't grab attention to the driver to see a zero amount beside the shipment. Also, it had a trip number with a dollar amount. It didn't show the level of service performed. Unless a driver recorded that a trip number was a certain service on their own, they would have no idea if they were paid properly. Some trips were set to not pay the driver but the company still received payment from the customer.

Tens of thousands of dollars were never paid to drivers. Over time, I become less concerned about drivers not being paid

properly. It was part of the culture of the company.

The owners pushed for us to upgrade services on the phones with customers. They claimed we were starving and at risk of company closure. **You live... what you learn.**

The owners had beautiful offices with trophies on their desks. Virtually no paperwork on their desks. In fact, they were hardly ever at the company to oversee operations.

The company had a picnic but only office staff were invited. No one knew where the owners lived and when we arrived. It was a 3 car garage, 4-5 Thousand Square Foot house. It was a mansion in a super rich area. The backyard was something you only see in a magazine.

### Realization

The house was so over the top, we realized that the our company was making money. It was clear that the drivers who were never paid for their work; even though the customer would have paid their bill... the money was being put toward the owners personal greed.

The turn over rate was extremely high for drivers. If there were not enough drivers, it would be the owners to come down on the operations team to hire more people. Meanwhile, the owners were hardly ever there and felt they were above the rest.



At LRFT I am part of the payroll team for Chicken and Local drivers. The difference this time is that I was a driver. I know how hard I worked on the road.

Mark and John are not only the owners of LRFT, they were also former drivers. Nearly everyone that works for LRFT is engaged in trucking and enjoys the challenges of this field.

The difference is that our owners are engaged and interested in the well being of our entire Little Rock Family. They pull 6 day weeks. In fact, most of the internal staff works or is involved in some ways after their shift is finished.

Lately, we had to step up a notch on the chicken poultry hauling which required more drivers for a trial period. All drivers were in motion and we still needed more to accommodate the demand. As a result, Mark and John have

both been driving truck to look after the customer.

Drivers have been commenting on their surprise of seeing Mark and John behind the wheel. They have their obligations back here in Walkerton. However, without customers to serve, Little Rock would have no purpose for operating.

### The culture here is much different.

Drivers are paid fairly. Though Little Rock experiences the difficulties of the current fuel trend issues, our drivers are not being financially abused to make up for the loss.

I don't know about you, speaking selfishly for me, I find it refreshing that the owners are not too good to get into a truck to serve our customers. It's refreshing to see the owners do what they expect of all of us to do.

You don't see clean desks showcasing trophies with closed office doors to keep us out. With open doors and ears that listen, it's my reason for staying with Little Rock.

I have a friend that works for a company and their attitude is that "Men are a dime a dozen!". Which simply means, if we don't like you, you don't like us, or you don't perform... we get rid of you. I think this attitude is all too common.

At Little Rock, people who experience difficulties are given the opportunity to grow instead of being tossed out to the curb.

## Bye Bye Birdie

Larry, the Shop's Blue Budgie died in August. The tough shop mechanics were touched by the passing of their mascot. Rich says they seen Larry struggling over a few days and knew something was wrong. In the end, the shop mechanics buried Larry under a tree in the backyard. His grave is Marked with a mini cross.

"Larry... We Miss You".



## Join The Poultry Haul Team

Our chicken haulers are involved in 3 different areas of the chicken business. We have local, Eastern Canada and USA haulers. Each area has their own specialties. Lets take a look at each section.

Little Rock is known for hauling live poultry. It's a specialized type of hauling. It requires drivers to pay attention to their load. Small but important details such as weather, temperature, handling, and driving. Each of these areas are completely trainable and within time, the driver becomes the expert of their area.

There are different rules and job requirements depending on the customer. The objective is the same across all customers. Deliver the birds in good condition to the customer.

Mark talked about the diversity within Little Rock. Some drivers complain there is no work; however, the chicken biz is the most reliable and consistent level of business we have. You can count on several loads within the week.

All processing plants they are open Monday to Friday. Some drivers leave Saturday, Most Sunday, and usually everyone by Monday. Due to the time to get the birds and bring them back to the processing plants, drivers are usually finished by Thursday afternoon.

The far away locations require drivers to leave early to be at the farm for Sundays and bring them back for Monday's processing.

The key is to know that birds may not be on our truck more than 36 consecutive hours. The processing plants handles 100's of thousands of birds each month. In fact, our little company hauls over 2 million birds a month.

Lets take a look at each of the 3 areas of the live poultry haul.

### Local

Local Poultry Hauling is the most physically demanding of the 3. It requires drivers to pick up around the midnight hours. Here is what it requires:

- Drive to Farm.
- Local drivers load and restack their own crates. There is a special technique to the way the truck is loaded.
- Loading takes approximately 2 hours. Drivers are responsible for taking birds from the catchers and placing them into the crates.
- After loading, the driver will secure the chains the prevent the crates from falling off.
- If weather demands it, the drivers will slide the two sliding tarps on the sides to protect the birds and unroll the top tarp to protect the birds from the rain and/or snow.
- Drive to the processing plant.
- Drivers usually travel under 500 km and receive live loading payments, attendance, and a flat local rate.

### Eastern Canada

Eastern Canada includes Quebec and the Maritime Provinces. It's a consistent drive from the processing plants. Drivers are responsible to prepare trailers for loading which includes moving the first two rows of crates to the

top and rear of the trailer. Then, as they are finishing the last few rows, drivers must hand the empty crates down to the catching crew.

A driver's responsibilities are:

- Drive to the farm.
- Disassemble the chains and roll back any tarps for the catching crew.
- Sit in the driver's seat and when the crew leader tells you to move forward a few feet, you move the truck forward.
- Upon completion, slide the tarps and top tarp over the load (if required).
- Drive to the processing plant.
- **ADVANTAGE** — There is no cross border required for Eastern Loads. This type of trucking is perfect for those who cannot cross or prefer to stay in Canada.
- Eastern Canada falls under the Eastern Miles Premium too!

### USA

United States chicken are high on the priority list for one of our chicken processors. It's similar to Eastern Canada. States like NY, PA, CT, and DE fall under the Eastern Miles Payout. Our drivers are not allowed to work in the United States because it takes away from jobs in America. This is what the job responsibilities are:

- Drive To Farm.
- Disassemble Chains and Slide Back Tarps.
- Sit In The Driver's Seat and Wait For the Crew Leader to tell you to pull forward.
- The crew disassembles all crates and reloads the entire truck.
- Upon Completion, slide side and top tarps (if required). Fasten up the chains.

#### CHICKEN MYTH

**USA Drivers Do Not Touch Live Chicken or Handle Crates. The Catching Crew takes care of that.**

- At the Border, stop in at Customs for your completed paperwork. (Our dispatchers take care of all cross border paperwork and provides the driver with essential information for easy crossing.)

## Processing Plants

At the processing plants, sometimes it's the driver's responsibility to weigh their own trailers. It's the weight of the trailer that matters the most. It's how all of us are paid for our work.

Drivers are not responsible for unloading their trucks. However, they are responsible for undoing the chains and sliding tarps before backing them into the temperature controlled holding area.

The processing plant unloads and washes the trailers. Our drivers responsibility is to connect to a empty ready trailer. Our drivers will have to slide tarps and secure chains before departure.

## Positives

- LRFT Poultry Haulers are the highest paid drivers.
- Regular miles are paid with an additional chicken miles added to it.
- Lots of farms are considered in the Eastern Sector which allows extra payment of East Miles
- Drivers are paid for loading by moving your truck and securing the chains.
- Be home on weekends. Most drivers get back Thursday Morning / Afternoon and will leave during the weekend.
- Oct 1st–April 1st, drivers receive a Tarp Sliding Bonus.
- Drivers are going one way completely empty without worry of maintaining bird temperatures.
- 1 Pick Up and 1 Delivery Location.
- USA drivers don't touch birds.
- Farmers are required to empty their chicken houses completely. This requires multiple trucks to be loaded. It's is rare for only 1 of our trucks to be at a farm solo. We send multiple trucks to the same farms each day.

- Chicken hauling allows drivers to have a family life and comfort of guaranteed work.
- Many farms are visited multiple times each year, drivers become familiar with each farm location.
- USA Drivers need to roll the tarps on the rollers, undo their chains, then get back in their trucks and allow the catching crew do their magic.

## Inconvenient

- Drivers must manage tarps even in adverse weather conditions.
- The barns are sometimes muddy, proper foot wear is needed to deal with it.
- Most drivers wear overalls to protect their clothes as they secure the tarps and chains.

**We have the work, do you have the desire?**

**This type of trucking is completely trainable. With multiple trucks going to one farm. We can team you up with someone to show you how it's done. Talk to Don if you are interested in trying something new.**

## LRFT EMPLOYEE DEAL—Garmin NUVI 660 GPS Systems

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## Small But Important Changes

We have received a number of complaints regarding Dave not being able to answer the phone. Most times, he is already on the phone when a 2nd or even 3rd line is trying to get through to him at the same time

Dave's phone has been reprogrammed to ring and bounce any calls to Michael if he is on the phone. Michael's direct extension is 135 up until 5pm on Fridays or all day Mondays. After Hours on weekends, you must dial 139 to get Michael.

Trying to streamline the live haul is a never ending job. Dave prepares everyone's trip envelopes and sets up ACES for drivers at the same time.

Little Rock pays for each ACE that is processed through the system. Many times on weekends, ACES are cancelled due to equipment switching and/or drivers requesting passengers.

Drivers will not be issued two aces at one time. We have 24 hour dispatching available during the week. We will

be relying on dispatchers to send the driver's their next ace wherever they are at the time of switching up their loaded trailers for an empty trailer at the processing plant.

Having too many ACES complicates the dispatching program, dispatchers, and allowable changes. Once an ACE is issued, it locks in your trip and equipment in our system and changes can't be made.



## Wide Turning

A neighbour knows I work for Little Rock and recently seen a Little Rock Truck Bobtailing in Hanover. They were complaining the driver did a huge wide turn as if the trailer was attached.

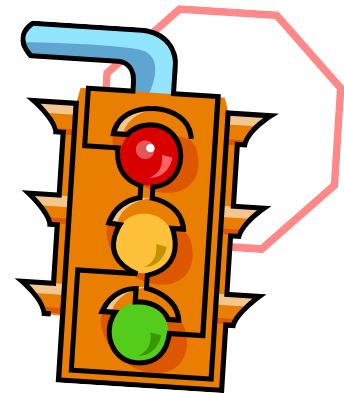
I told my neighbour to relax and that drivers are so used to dragging 53' behind them that Bobtailing is like driving

a GO CART. It's easy to forget that there is nothing attached. As long as if it was a safe turn, I got no problems with that. They agreed the driver was handling the truck with care.

I don't know about you. After jumping into my car, I still do wide turns. In fact, I've lost count how many

times I have missed my parking space at the grocery store because I took the turn into the space was too wide.

Not to forget how many times I have tried to reach for the stick to down shift my automatic car when coming to a traffic light.



## Why Should I Speed? There's Too Much To Lose!

Four wheelers tend to forget that they are driving 60 Feet behind us. They ride our bumpers, flash the lights, and forever driving in the centre of the road dying for a space to pass.

It is something that bothers many of the newbie drivers. After realizing that they are traveling so far behind you, it's not like you can see their facial expressions or hand gestures that clearly.

Set that cruise control and sail down the road.

Being caught for speeding is not only a personal hit on your driving abstract. Your driving abstract plays a part in our insurance as well. The fine is direct money out of your pocket that could have been used to pay some bills.

Driving is your bread and butter. Having your commercial driver's license taken away is like getting you fired

from your job. These four wheelers love to push us along, but they don't have as much to loose as we do. Most commercial drivers are patient and conscious of traffic, they are used to traffic jams, delays and frustrations from the road.



# Can't Plead Ignorance By: Geoff Goetz—Long Haul Driver

Thank god for automatic transmissions. It leaves a hand free to hold your beer. Funny stuff, huh? We used to say this when I was 17 or so. Times have changed. What got me thinking about this was a bumper sticker I saw on the road that said, "If you can't drive, and talk on the phone, then you shouldn't be driving" Anyone not aware of the perils of being distracted by cellular conversations, must, like an old smoker, be deep in denial of the progression of studies that prove this activity to be dangerous to your health.



careless driving. There have been many cases in the US where juries have awarded millions of dollars to victims of crashes where the driver was on the cell phone and if the employer is complacent (business related call) he too is being held responsible.

When you have driven over a minivan full of kids because of a late reaction, or a wrong one, "I'm sorry", doesn't cut it. All the money they can wring out of you can't fix it.

The published data from traffic safety studies indicate



that drivers are five times more likely to be involved in a crash while talking on a cell phone. And hands free makes no difference. The problem isn't that your hands are occupied, automatics solve that annoyance. The headache is that your mind is occupied. Humans are very poor at multi

tasking. If you think you are better than average, get yourself a colouring book and a bunch of crayons and phone your best friend.

We are the professionals. We should take pride in that fact. We need to lead by example. When we thought it was cute to drive drunk it was ignorance. If you still drive drunk, it's arrogance. Now you are aware of the research. If you still talk on the phone while you're driving, you can't plead ignorance. \*\*\*\* Geoff Goetz \*\*\*\*



By taking our attention out of the vehicle with a phone conversation, we become less aware of what is happening around us. Two different studies show it has the same effect as being .08% impaired.. We see a lot of boneheaded manoeuvres out there. My favourite was the man driving in the curb side lane, talking on his cell. When the lane exited, he continued driving forward on the paved shoulder, unaware his lane had left him. But we have all cursed the inattentiveness of the other guy. I can often tell if the driver is on the phone. His speed bears no relation to the flow of traffic, only to the car he's following, and he's following too close. Three drivers in a simulator rear ended the computer generated car in front of them.



Because of reduced eye lead time he will lane change into a lane that is closed for construction, or ending, or in behind a slow moving vehicle. He doesn't check his blind spot BEFORE he changes lanes and seldom has a free hand to signal his intent.



With phone records they can find out if you were on the phone at the time of the crash and you can be charged with

## Thanks Geoff

Geoff is a long haul driver with Little Rock. He's been with us for a number of years. Geoff is a big time reader and prefers to read in the truck verses watching television.

Geoff was talking about this beef he has with me a few months back and I encouraged him to write up something for the newsletter because his beef affects us all. I appreciated your contribution Geoff!

This is our newsletter and I encourage everyone to pass ideas and even write something. Some of you may not be gifted at writing or even the motivation to do so... however, the idea on topics would be great too. Please share them with me.

Michael