

Kelley's Corner

In my business I have the opportunity to talk to many fleet owners and operators. A common lament is the shortage of quality drivers and operators. I guess this is not startling news.....don't go away.

The ability to find and retain good drivers has been beaten to death by many of the contributors to well known industry publications, but there seems to be a driver retention element which is often overlooked - that is the quality of repair service offered by employers. You say you have owner operators and they look after themselves? I suggest you read on before another company steals them.

A driver is based here in B.C. and has a "truck down" power train failure in an unfamiliar area in Kentucky. The company has not given the driver clear information regarding corporate repair procedures. The driver calls local information and finds the only tow truck company in the area. The tow truck driver arrives and demands a "danger pay" premium before he will hook up of \$700.00usd because of the neighborhood. He also directs the company driver to the repair location. The company driver's cellular phone battery is dying and evening is approaching. Not wanting to be stranded in the neighborhood after dark she/he agrees to the terms. Repairs are completed on the unit and the company driver pays with her/his personal credit card because the company does not have an account with the repair shop or the towing company. Upon return to base the driver submits for repair reimbursement and is initially denied because:

1. The power train part was under warranty - A warranty dealer was 10km distant.
2. The local call on the driver's cell phone was over \$50.00 due to questionable billing practices by the local service provider.
3. The towing was deemed excessive.

This is a true story. Although the driver was eventually reimbursed, the experience was last of a series of events which caused her/him to move to another company. The same type of experience can afflict an owner operator who does not have corporate support in an unfamiliar location. The company was unable to recover repair costs under warranty.

There are questions we need to answer:

- Why did the driver have so much trouble receiving a warranty repair?
- Why was the driver put at risk to his/her personal safety?
- Why did the company handle the situation poorly and lose the driver?

See you next month for the exciting answers to these questions.

Regards
Kelley