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Bartow's Kennesaw Transportation earns recognition for safety

by Matt Shinall

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Safety is a major concern of most business sectors but few inherently involve the implications found within the trucking industry. For Kennesaw Transportation, the matter of safety is not taken lightly and that was recently proven as the Bartow County-based trucking fleet took first in its class in a national safety competition.

"In this industry the obvious thing that all of us are concerned with on the day-to-day basis is safely moving 80,000-pound vehicles up and down the road," said Michael Clay, Kennesaw Transportation director of safety.

Ranking applicants from its nationwide membership list, the Truckload Carriers Association announced recently the recipients of the 2010 National Fleet Safety Awards. Recording 29.4 million miles on the road, Kennesaw Transportation competed with others in its division, all driving within 25 million and 49.9 million miles. Of the 18 companies recognized for outstanding safety records, Kennesaw Transportation was the only recipient in Georgia with only one other in the Southeast.

TCA is a trade organization representing the industry in regulatory matters while providing members with various services.

"Safety has always been the top priority in this industry. TCA developed these awards 36 years ago to recognize the top performers," stated Don Lacy, chairman of TCA's Safety and Security Division and director of safety for Prime Inc., Springfield, Mo., in a press release. "Today, receiving a National Fleet Safety Award has become a highly coveted badge of honor that recognizes and rewards companies for working tirelessly to improve their procedures in the safety arena."

Kennesaw Transportation has steadily climbed the ranks within its division, placing third in 2008 and second in 2009 before landing the top spot for 2010 with an accident frequency ratio of 0.169 per million miles driven.

After determining the top three fleets in each division, TCA will review applicants in-depth to find two grand prize winners to be announced at an annual meeting in May. The review includes several areas of business beyond the accident frequency ratio.

"Basically they complete a review of your safety programs and it's a very detailed

application for the grand prize. There's definitely a lot of 'Q and A' and you have to give an overall briefing of your company, including how long you've been in business, how many drivers, what's your hiring criteria, safety goals -- those types of things," Clay said.

Kennesaw Transportation employs a number of programs to increase safety, including continuing education, training and proper equipment maintenance, but they also look for safety habits in a potential driver before they are even hired.

"We are very selective from an applications standpoint. We look at overall years of driving experience, [Motor Vehicle Records], what type of issues on MVRs, accidents -- from an experience standpoint -- how much over-the-road experience do they have. It's pretty detailed," Clay said.

In addition to such programs, Kennesaw Transportation annually awards safety and longevity bonuses for drivers remaining accident free and those reaching milestones in their career, including a \$10,000 five-year bonus. After recruiting safe drivers, the company effectively incentivizes safety and longevity.

"By offering things like that, we obviously have a very good retention rate, employees stay with us longer, and these are people who day in and day out have a very safety conscious attitude and driving style. They are obviously the main reason we win awards like this," Clay said.

The grand prize selection also will detail company history, ownership and leadership, which, according to Clay, are some of Kennesaw's top traits. Owner Pat Patrick founded the company 30 years ago and continues to play an active role in the organization.

"We're a family-run company, been in business a long time, I think that awards like this and recognition is a great indication of the ownership -- Pat Patrick and Linda Patrick and the Patrick family overall. We try to do it right and winning awards like this is a great achievement showing all the hard work that goes into our 285 drivers and 160 something trucks on the road every day," Clay said.

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