

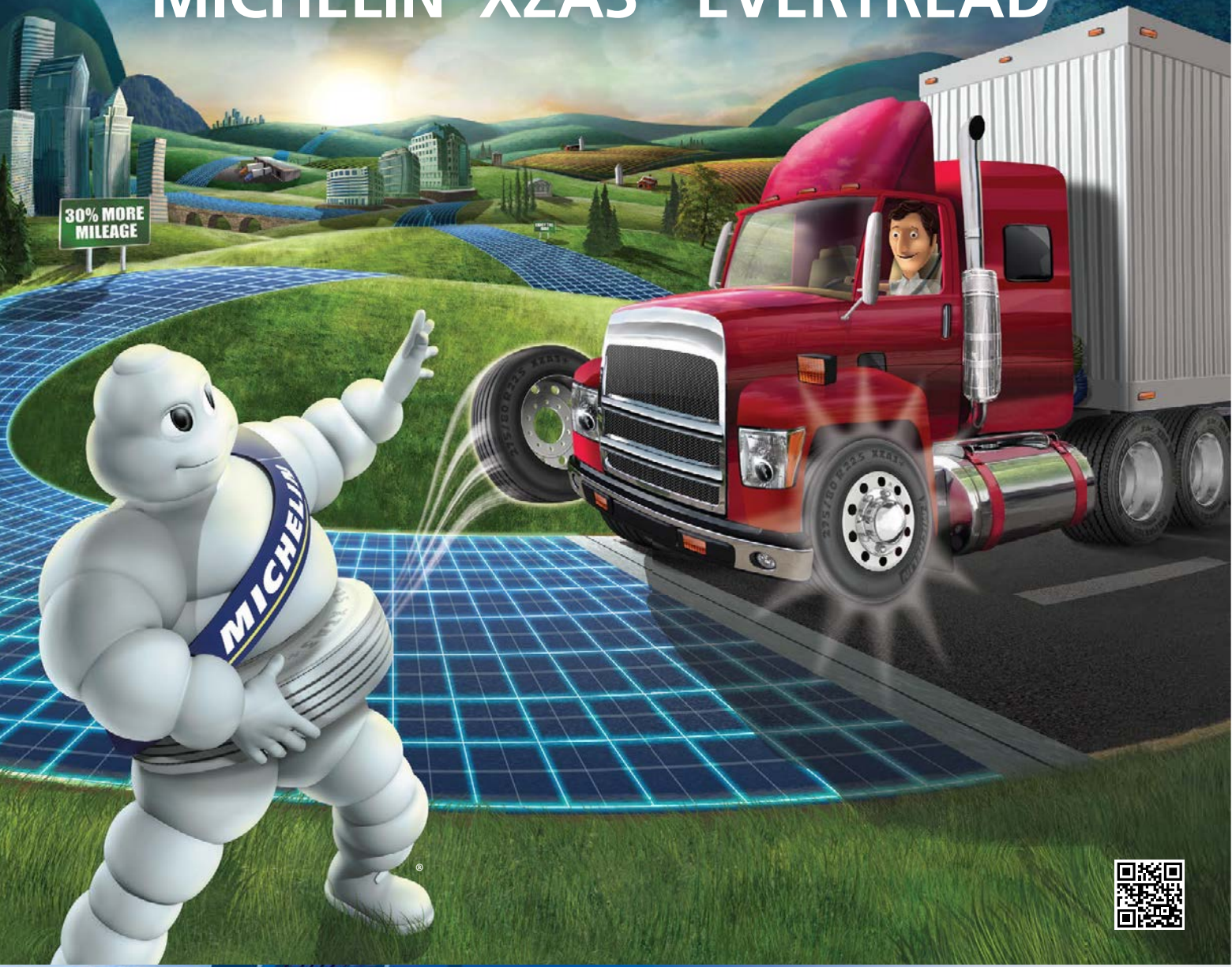
# STRAIGHT TALK SMART STRATEGIES

VOLUME 5

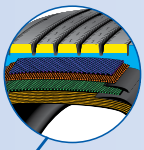
Your guide to the most effective  
fuel saving practices

Produced by the editors of  
Truck News, Truck West  
& Fleet Executive  
In partnership with Michelin  
North America (Canada) Inc.

# GET 30% MORE ROAD WITH THE MICHELIN® XZA3®+ EVERTREAD™



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## Straight Talk; Smart Strategies

Welcome to the next installment of our continuing Straight Talk, Smart Strategies series of digital supplements providing carriers and owner/operators with insightful information on how to best optimize business growth. This issue we focus on sustainable transportation practices. This is the first of two in-depth reports on this most important subject. Both are brought to you once again in partnership with Michelin North America (Canada) Inc.

Green transportation practices are no passing fad. When done right they make a considerable contribution to the bottom line. Take fuel efficiency, for example. Despite the temporary reprieve at the pumps, if we've learned anything over the past 15 years it's that fuel pricing is volatile and always resumes its upward climb after a price drop like we've experienced over the past few months. Smart operators are fuel efficient operators, no matter the pump price.

In this issue we profile three fleets who have used the SmartWay program to gain a better understanding of their spending on fuel and move towards more cost-effective strategies.

Tires are a significant contributor to fuel efficiency and many Canadian fleets have been looking to SmartWay approved tires. However, as you will read in our feature on the subject, not all SmartWay tires are created equal. Read what you need to consider in ensuring your SmartWay approved tires deliver both low rolling resistance and performance.

Fuel efficiency is not possible just with the latest truck designs. There are many bolt-on truck and trailer technologies available today that can begin saving you fuel tomorrow. We outline for you some of the most popular, proven and easy-to-implement.

And there is plenty more to learn. The next installment of our Straight Talk, Smart Strategies supplement on sustainable transportation practices will examine what you should expect from Phase 2 of the US greenhouse gas regulations, which will likely set new fuel economy standards for heavy trucks; report on retreading with a special emphasis on programs for the small fleet and owner/operator; and also focus on the most important element in fuel efficiency: the driver.

I also encourage you to turn to the special Straight Talk, Smart Strategies Knowledge Centre we have created for you on [www.trucknews.com](http://www.trucknews.com) for more news, features and informative videos about sustainable transportation practices. It's a multi-media educational package designed to help you learn and thrive in the years ahead. I hope you profit from it.

**Lou Smyrlis**

*Publisher & Editorial Director*

*Truck News, Truck West & Fleet Executive*

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**Profiling three  
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intelligent approach  
to fuel savings**

# DOING IT THE *SmartWay*



## SmartWay membership a bright Idea for RoadStar

**W**ith lower diesel prices at the pump, it might be understandable for a trucking company to temporarily lose sight of the importance of fuel efficiency – to take its eye off the ball, if even for a moment. Just don't mention that to Chris Eriksen, general manager of the SmartWay carrier, RoadStar Trucking.

"Absolutely not," he retorted, when asked if this was the case. "With the current softening of diesel prices, some customers have asked for a reduction in their applied fuel surcharges. So no, we can't take our eyes off it."

Based out of a single terminal in Milton, Ont., RoadStar operates 115 power units and 225 tandem trailers, a mix of dry vans and refrigerated trucks. Most of its business is to the U.S., but it also serves the Toronto-Montreal corridor. The company was founded on the principle of providing value-add services, and charging appropriately for those services. "This allows us to be competitive in the driver market and pay them a fair market wage," Eriksen explained.

To offer competitive pay to drivers requires a carrier to look at other areas to reduce operating costs. The obvious target is fuel consumption. RoadStar joined the SmartWay Transport Partnership in 2009 with an eye towards reducing its fuel spend and equally important, its environmental footprint.

"Our speed reduction policy is probably our biggest 'catch' to date," Eriksen explained. "Our entire fleet is subject to speed fuel consumption."

Of course to implement such changes requires buy-in from the entire organization, and some initial resistance had to be overcome.

"Certainly, the implementation to the fleet was a change, and change always comes with some resistance," Eriksen said. "But through diligence, we were able to get most (drivers and staff) to see the benefits. The company fleet was certainly watched a little more closely than the owner/operator fleet in the beginning, since it was our fuel. We needed to show the owner/operators our savings, therefore opening their eyes somewhat. Today, we have full buy-in from the fleet. With fuel

being our largest cost, we need to continue to monitor all parts of our corporate standard operating procedures."

All new trucks placed into the fleet have been ordered with fuel efficiency in mind. "We are conscious when purchasing new equipment that the equipment hosts the latest technology." This includes some obvious aerodynamic options such as full fairings and covered fuel tanks, as well as some more advanced powertrain specifications.

"I believe SmartWay has made us more conscious of considerations when spec'ing new equipment," Eriksen acknowledged. "Recently, we have purchased 20 new line haul units for cross-border applications with 16-speed automatics and a 2:55 gear ratio, providing us great savings on fuel. All of our

**RoadStar Trucking** offers local truckload service in the Greater Toronto Area as well as dry van and temperature controlled cross-border truckload service, connecting the mid-West US with Ontario markets.

The carrier, founded by Rob Dhanoa who himself started behind the wheel, offers expedited truckload service to and from the Ontario and California markets.

It has recently added freight management and third party logistics services for both less-than-truckload and truckload requirements throughout North America as well as intermodal less-than-truckload service from Ontario to Western Canada.

It operates 115 power units and 225 tandem trailers, a mix of dry vans and reefers. A minority carrier, RoadStar has always been active in the East Indian community.



## FGM finds investment in SmartWay worth the returns

Little changes can make a huge difference. And paying attention to the details makes it possible to understand exactly which little changes are most helpful in improving fuel economy and becoming a greener fleet. Those are realizations FGM Trucklines Inc. in Bolton, Ont., has arrived at through its participation in the SmartWay program.

FGM, a family-run business, has 23 trucks, mostly Peterbilts and Kenworths, and 30 trailers that do long-haul runs into the southern United States. For the past four years, FGM has been a SmartWay member – a decision that has seen improvements in fuel economy but also experienced a swing in FGM’s company culture.

Justin Moss, FGM’s director of dispatch, said initially participating in SmartWay required considerable time and effort to collect annual data but, the results were definitely worth it.

“The very first SmartWay tool I filled out probably took me two days to compile the information. I was really blown away by how in-depth it was. The information they asked for was stuff that was always there – how much fuel we purchased and how many kilometres we ran – time. There wasn’t one person who took care of all of this. The safety department took care of how many miles and how many states we ran through, and what we had to give to the International Registration Plan (IRP) office. Accounts payable had to figure out what we were paying for fuel this week, and how much it was last week.”

“There wasn’t really a culture or an understanding of what we were running per litre, our cost per kilometre, what we were spending

per litre or per kilometre on fuel, that sort of stuff. It was there but it wasn’t. Being able to fill out that first tool, I was able to bring everything together and at the end, when we saw the benchmarking report, we were able to see how many litres per kilometre we had, and how long we idled. At that point, once you see those numbers you can affix a cost for those numbers. That’s when we started to move from there.”

Moving on from there meant making some voluntary changes, not just to the equipment mounted on the trucks, but the trucks themselves. Now FGM has not just added on low rolling resistance tires and trailer skirts, and switched to lighter-weight trailers, but it has changed its truck-buying philosophy. Prior to joining SmartWay, much of FGM’s fleet was older Peterbilts that were “cool to look at with the lights and stuff,” said Moss, even if they weren’t the most fuel-efficient.

“We were running with the same, older mentality we had when we were starting the company. We had trucks with the big engines. Had to make sure we had enough power, and we operated them in a certain way to make sure the freight moved consistently and we were able to pick-up without being concerned about truck weight,” he said.

“I can tell you five years ago we were probably dead set against buying new trucks. We had these big fancy trucks with these big fancy motors. Everything looked good when it was rolling down the road. That culture is almost gone out the window. Now it’s all about aerodynamics and fuel efficiency, the carbon footprint. There is a lot more of that now in the new culture than there was before.”

trailers are equipped with full side skirts, starting behind the landing gear and stopping just prior to the front axle of the tandems.”

RoadStar has taken advantage of the extra surface space the trailer fairings afford, to promote its environmental awareness. “Think Green for a Better Tomorrow,” the colourful skirts read. They’re emblazoned with an image of a family set upon a background of blue sky and green trees. It’s an eye-catching message.

“We always receive positive comments on the wrapped skirts,” Eriksen said. Those trailer fairings are no doubt seen by thousands of motorists and passengers each day.

“I can’t say that SmartWay has had a direct reflection on new business growth,” Eriksen says. “But it certainly hasn’t hurt. Customers notice RoadStar’s SmartWay branding, identifying RoadStar as a member.”

The company’s focus on sustainability has also been appreciated by staff and drivers, he added. While joining the program in the beginning involved some “somewhat daunting” administration, maintaining the program is simple, according to Eriksen.

And as an added benefit, participating in the SmartWay program ensures you never lose sight of the importance of fuel-efficiency.

“It forces you to look at the data, to keep in real touch with your fleet,” Eriksen said. “It also gives you the ability to identify areas that could – or will – need improvements.”

And that holds true, even if fuel is a little cheaper at the pump these days.

That cultural shift has extended outside of the purchasing department and into other aspects of the business. Dispatch, for example, has started thinking differently about how it routes the trucks.

“As a culture, especially in dispatch, we are very much more mindful of how many off-route miles we run. There is always a direct route from A to B. We try to stay on that direct route. That has become a very big part of our culture.”

Another part of the company’s culture that has been changed by SmartWay is the marketing side of the business. Having the SmartWay technology logo on the side of its trucks and the SmartWay partnership logo in its e-mail signatures is an easy way for FGM to promote itself and let its customers know that it’s taking steps to reduce its carbon footprint. According to Moss, that is a message that is definitely getting through.

“As a culture, especially in dispatch, we are very much more mindful of how many off-route miles we run. There is always a direct route from A to B. We try to stay on that direct route. That has become a very big part of our culture.”

**Justin Moss, director of dispatch, FGM Trucklines**

“We’ve had a few people ask about it. They do recognize we have the logo in our e-mails and when the truck rolls up, they see the little tag on the side of it. That’s good exposure, leading customers to ask ‘What do you do? How do you get the investment back? How do you pay for it?’”

Moss is convinced that even more people will be asking those questions and more in the future. In particular, he expects it will soon be common for customers to ask: what is FGM doing to reduce its environ-

mental footprint? And being part of SmartWay, he will be able to easily provide an answer, especially now that the company is used to providing the data SmartWay requires. Unlike his time-consuming first attempt to fill out the tool, Moss said completing the latest one took less than 15 minutes.

A lot has changed since the company received its first SmartWay evaluation report. At the time, Moss said he could see that there was need for change at FGM. By setting their sights on areas for improvement and implementing a series of little changes, FGM has improved its fuel efficiency and reduced its environmental footprint faster than the freight industry average.



**FGM Truck Lines** is a full load (FTL) and less than truck load (LTL) carrier, headquartered in Bolton, Ont. It operates 53-foot high cube air ride trailers providing service between points in the United States and Canada. All tractors are equipped with satellite tracking and communication technology.

## Mullen Group’s trucks do SmartWay their

If you think optimizing fuel economy and managing emissions across a fleet of 10 trucks is challenging, try doing so for 10 trucking companies.

Okotoks, Alta.-based Mullen Group operates a trucking and logistics segment that is comprised of 10 carriers, as well as an oilfield services segment made up of 16 additional companies, many of which provide trucking services. Each individual company in Mullen Group is granted the autonomy to make decisions that work best for its own operations; but best practices are shared across the group.

This is also how Mullen Group has approached the SmartWay program. Since as far back as 2006, cross-border trucking firms within Mullen Group have been signing on to the SmartWay program, tracking their fuel performance and benchmarking their operations. Now that the program has come to Canada, Mullen Group is looking to get its domestic fleets such as Jay’s Moving & Storage on-board as well.

“It originated with our cross-border fleets, so when you look down the list you’ll look at companies like Mill Creek, Kleysen, Payne Transportation, Tenold and Mullen Trucking being involved. That was kind of the start of our introduction. With the launch of SmartWay Canada by Natural Resources Canada, that opens up the door for some of the other companies within our group,” said Randy Mercer, director of Health, Safety and Environment for Mullen Group.

Getting individual carriers signed on to the SmartWay program can be an onerous process at first, but once they’ve joined, it becomes easier to maintain their SmartWay status, Mercer explained.

“When you first participate in the program, there’s a lot of up-front paperwork and documentation that you have,” he said. “Fleet truck counts, trailer counts, APUs, idle policies – you have to go through the whole gamut. But after the

# Trucking companies own way

initial application, it's more of a yearly update, so it's very time-consuming to start off with the program but after that, it's mostly maintenance."

Despite the administrative challenges that joining SmartWay initially incurs, the benefits of belonging to the program are obvious, since SmartWay's objectives to help fleets manage and improve their fuel economy while transporting goods in the cleanest most efficient way possible are aligned with a carrier's own goals to reduce costs and improve profitability.

"To get buy-in from our senior leadership has been relatively easy," Mercer said. "Most people are on-board with it. It's not a difficult sell."

The trucking companies in Mullen Group will travel about 250 million kilometres this year, so even a seemingly small reduction in fuel consumption will deliver big savings when extrapolated across the entire business.

Because Mullen Group's trucking companies run a mix of company-owned and lease/operator-run trucks, it was imperative that owner/operators also supported the program if it was to achieve success. Mercer said they have been receptive to the program and eager to participate because in the end when owner/operators follow best practices in fuel efficiency that helps them save money. "A good part of the SmartWay program is reducing fuel and, of course, that equates to saving cash," Mercer said.

Mullen Group companies who are part of SmartWay have also found their involvement has resonated with customers. "Absolutely, we use it in our marketing," said Mercer. "We've got a SmartWay logo on our websites throughout our business units. SmartWay is a joint venture between the shipping and transportation communities so there are a lot of big names in the shipping community that participate in this program as well."

In participating in SmartWay, Mullen's



**Mullen Group** consists of 26 companies within two business segments: oilfield services and trucking/logistics. Its trucking/logistics segment provides a range of transportation services to shippers on a for-hire basis, including bulk hauling, truckload, less-than-load and general freight services throughout Canada and the US.

The segment also provides direct service to and from Mexico through interline agreements with certified Mexican carriers.

Mullen Group's total fleet consists of 4,500 vehicles and 7,500 trailers deployed across a network of 70 terminals.

trucking firms have focused on spec'ing fuel-efficient equipment, properly maintaining it and reducing idle-time. "General maintenance is a big component to a fuel-efficient vehicle, but you also look at other things," said Mercer. "You look at APU (auxiliary power unit) usage, idle policy. Do you have an idle policy? Do you govern your vehicles' speed?"

Driver training is another important component of Mullen Group's SmartWay strategy. By training drivers on defensive driving skills using the Smith System and other available training programs, Mercer said drivers have become safer and more fuel-efficient.

"It doesn't matter which defensive driving course you teach, progressive shifting is a key to good fuel savings. Backing off the accelerator when approaching a light, maintaining good following distance - all these things are key contributors to brake wear, tire wear and fuel consumption. A good defensive driving program pays incredible dividends back to you. You get a good, defensive driver, plus you're reducing the maintenance costs on the vehicle and you're saving fuel."

Because Mullen Group operates such a diverse fleet - and fleets within the fleet -

it allows each company to make its own choices with regards to SmartWay. "We try to give them a lot of latitude to run their own organization the way they see fit and decide which policies they want to jump onto and not paint every company with the same brush and the same colour. They're all independently run and operated," Mercer pointed out.

Still, the trucking companies within Mullen Group are happy to share what has worked best for them and which initiatives failed to meet expectations.

"One of the benefits of being such a large organization is that we can share best practices amongst each other and we do that as best we can on a weekly basis," Mercer said.

Another advantage of belonging to the SmartWay program, and one that's easy to overlook, is that employees feel good about being associated with a company that's actively looking to reduce its impact on the environment. "I think it's important and I think our employees grasp onto it and also think it's important," Mercer said. "The more you can think about the future of our planet, the better off we'll all be in the long run."



# es that *really do* save fuel



## Trailer tails

Up to 25% of aerodynamic drag encountered by a tractor-trailer occurs at the rear of the trailer. Trailer tails are mounted there to manage the airflow as it tumbles off the rear of the trailer. ATDynamics' trailer tails have been proven using SAE Type II testing procedures, to reduce fuel consumption by 5.54% at 65 mph. They are SmartWay-verified and now legal in some - but not all - Canadian provinces.

## Aerodynamic mud flaps

Aerodynamic mud flaps, which allow air to pass through small slits in the surface area while mud and debris is stopped, are said to improve fuel mileage by 0.5-2%, though no such devices appear on the SmartWay-verified list of products. These mud flaps come from a variety of producers, the better known being Fleet Engineers and Eco-Flap. Eco-Flap claims SAE J1321 Type II testing showed a 1.7% improvement when using its product.

## Wide-base single tires

Replacing dual tires with wide-base singles such as Michelin's X One at the drive and trailer positions can improve fuel economy by up to 10%, according to a US Department of Energy study. Some provinces allow full Canadian weights to be hauled using wide-base tires while others do not, so be sure to check the regulations for the provinces you plan to run.

## Wheel covers

Solus wheel covers have been verified by SmartWay to reduce fuel consumption by about 1%, by keeping air from getting caught up in the wheels. Flow Below's wheel covers don't appear on the SmartWay-verified list of products, but they have won a fan in Mesilla Valley Transportation, which tested the covers using the SAE J1321 standard and discovered a fuel savings of 2.23%. The fleet was convinced enough to equip all 1,200 of its tractors with the wheel covers.

## Halo tire inflation system

It's accepted that maintaining proper tire inflation pressures can contribute to better fuel economy. Traditionally tire inflation systems have been fairly complex, but Aperia has brought to market a bolt-on solution that doesn't tap into the air system. Instead, it generates its power like a self-winding watch, using the rotational motion of the wheels as an energy source. The company claims it can improve mpg by 1.4% by maintaining proper inflation pressures – with the added benefits of preventing tire failures and premature wear.



# Do your homework when choosing a SmartWay tire

## Not all SmartWay tires are created equal

BY JAMES MENZIES

If you're looking to grow profits and reduce operating costs – and who isn't? – tires are a good place to start. Up to a third of the energy required to move a tractor-trailer down the road is spent overcoming rolling resistance and the tires are the only part of the vehicle that are in contact with the road.



So it's obvious that low rolling resistance tires have the potential to significantly improve fuel economy, but choosing the right low rolling resistance tire is not so simple. The US EPA SmartWay program has developed an exhaustive list of tires that meet its requirements for low rolling resistance. However, the list of SmartWay-verified tires now features more than 150 suppliers and hundreds of tires, so it's important to understand that not all SmartWay tires are created equal.

Since SmartWay measures just one performance variable – rolling resistance – there's no guarantee a tire verified by the program will perform to your

expectations in other equally important areas, such as traction and wear life. For that reason, it's fine to reference SmartWay's list of verified tires, but your research when choosing a tire shouldn't end there. Just because it's a SmartWay tire doesn't mean it's a good tire when it comes to overall performance.

"The original intent of SmartWay wasn't to have 180 different companies saying they're SmartWay-verified, which they are," said Paul Crehan, Michelin's director of product marketing for North America. "The real key is, it's very easy for anyone to focus on one performance (attribute)."

Theoretically a tire manufacturer could submit to SmartWay a tire with a shallow tread depth and meet its rolling resistance requirements, but the tire might offer insufficient traction and wear out quickly. And was the casing even retreadable? Even within the SmartWay list, there's a large performance variance between approved tires in terms of rolling resistance. Michelin itself, for instance, has tires there that meet the requirements and others that far surpass the minimum standard.

When choosing a SmartWay tire, fleets need to first do some soul-searching, and determine what their core values are and what's most important to them, Crehan suggested.

"The fleet has to know, what's important to the fleet?" he explained. "By that I mean, the fleet should be able to describe to us or themselves why they make money or what their value proposition is. In the extreme case, for instance, if they're delivering live organs in the winter in Montreal it will be a very, very different scenario than if they're delivering hay in Texas. The urgency, the downside to non-delivery, the weather conditions – they just don't have anything to do with each other. Those are the sorts of things that a fleet needs to decide. What makes them special, what makes them tick, what makes them successful? It's going to be different for each fleet, hopefully."

Once a fleet has defined its core values and specialties, Crehan said it's easier to hone in on the most appropriate tire for their specific application.

"We try to have a lot of discussions with the fleets



about their key success factors and how they play into their tire choices, then that leads very quickly to the answer (on tire selection),” Crehan explained. “So what the fleet needs to do is, know what’s important to their operations. Then, they need to look for tires that fill that promise, be it mileage, be it cost, be it wet traction.”

Smaller fleets can work through this process with their dealer and larger fleets can sometimes work directly with the tire manufacturer to arrive at the best tire choice. Consider these experts an extension of your business; they have the tire expertise that very few fleets would have internally.

“It’s not a one-size-fits-all,” Crehan stressed. “There are tires that we offer that are just below the SmartWay threshold and there are tires that are very far below the SmartWay threshold. They’re not the same. They don’t offer the same balance of performance. If you are a fleet that from morning to night, you’re going for fuel efficiency in everything you do, then that would lead you to one solution. If you are a fleet where you don’t see your equipment very often, so you need tires that are readily available and that any driver can jump in, then that’s a different solution.”

There’s often a correlation between the tires and the type of equipment they’re being installed onto. For instance, Crehan said it makes little sense to buy the most aerodynamic, fuel-efficient vehicles on the market and then to run tires that aren’t optimized for fuel economy. Doing so would negate some of the fuel savings the fleet invested in when it chose to order such fuel-efficient equipment.

This is part of the reason why so many aerodynamic tractor-trailer combinations are equipped with wide-base single tires. They are among the best when it comes to rolling resistance, by about 10% when compared to traditional duals. There is also a significant weight savings to be enjoyed, so that fleets can add more payload or enjoy additional fuel savings resulting from the lower gross combination weight of the vehicle.

While many fleets have transitioned to wide-base singles and other low rolling resistance tires for the obvious benefits of reduced fuel costs, government has also played a role in their adoption and will continue to do so. Phase 2 of the joint EPA/NHTSA greenhouse gas standards for

heavy trucks is expected to be revealed in detail this June and may promote the use of more fuel-efficient tires on both the tractor and the trailer.

Crehan said this push from government helps reinforce the message Michelin has been preaching for many years.

“Compared to a number of years ago, we no longer need to be selling the message of fuel,” he said. “You go back five, 10 years, there was enormous effort by ourselves and some others to sell the benefits of low rolling resistance tires. That message is something we’ve been promoting for a very long time. Now, we don’t have to do it anymore because the government – a third party – is saying it for us in a very authoritative way.”

Progressive fleets as well can now speak to the benefits of low rolling resistance tires, Crehan pointed out, and many of them do just that. It’s no longer a secret that tires can deliver significant fuel savings. However, sorting through the now-cluttered list of SmartWay approved tires is where the challenge lays.

Fleets must remember there’s no correlation between SmartWay and quality, only SmartWay and rolling resistance. It’s reasonable to believe some tires that appear on the SmartWay list were designed only to achieve certification while enormous amounts of R&D and engineering effort have gone into the design of others.

Michelin, for example, has some SmartWay tires that now feature multiple tread compounds within one product.

“The X Multi Energy D and X Line Energy D have a tread compound that is actually two tread compounds, one that touches the road and one which, for the most part, doesn’t,” explained Crehan. “The tread that touches the road for the most part is a high rolling resistance compound and offers the traction everyone is used to. We’re getting the benefit from having the material underneath, which is a lower rolling resistance compound. Not everyone can do that. Also, we have a lot of features that are regenerative, meaning they open up as the tire wears.”

Tire technology has advanced rapidly in the past five to 10 years and Crehan urges fleets not to make decisions based on past experiences. Some of these advanced technologies have allowed Michelin to produce low rolling resistance tires that provide traction equal to what even today’s high rolling resistance tires can offer. So the safest bet when choosing a low rolling resistance tire from the list of SmartWay-verified products is to work with a supplier that you can trust to have taken no shortcuts in the pursuit of fuel economy. ●

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