

Daimler: Global unit starting

Daimler Trucks is establishing the Autonomous Technology Group as a global organization for automated driving, bringing together its worldwide expertise and activities, as of June 1. The main tasks of the new unit comprise overall strategy and implementation of the automated driving roadmap, including research and development as well as setting up the required operations infrastructure and network, heading towards the series production of highly automated trucks (SAE Level 4).

The newly established Autonomous Technology Group is part of Daimler Trucks' global effort to put highly automated trucks on the road within a decade. To achieve this, Daimler Trucks announced



Daimler Trucks' new group is part of a global effort to put highly automated trucks on roads within a decade. Photo: Daimler Trucks North America

an investment of more than \$570 million at the 2019 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. In commercial trucking, Level 4 is the logical next step after Level 2 to increase safety as well as efficiency and productivity.

Software development for highly automated driving will be one of the key activities of the Autonomous

Technology Group. Another will be the so-called vehicle project. On the one hand, the vehicle project will be responsible for the redundancy in the chassis enabling the vehicle's systems to take over roles of a professional driver while on the road, providing the highest safety. And on the other, the vehicle project will take care of the automated driving sensor kit integration (camera, lidar, radar), which together with a very accurate map is responsible for ensuring that the highly automated truck finds its own way on the road. The operations infrastructure and network to be set up by the Autonomous Technology Group will consist of one main vehicle control center as well as additional stations at logistics hubs. **T**

Pretrip inspections a must

I recently ran across a great article from ATBS called "The Importance of the Pretrip Truck Inspection." In my opinion, the article was spot on in enumerating the reasons why drivers should perform their pretrip inspections. According to ATBS, those reasons are:

- **Safety.** Pretrip inspections are one of the best ways to ensure safety. As the article said, "It can be dangerous to go out on the road with a load not secured, brakes that are damaged, wiring that is not connected, etc." All of those things can be easily identified during a thorough pretrip inspection.

- **Legal.** By law, drivers have to ensure vehicles are safe to operate, and the way to do that is through the pretrip inspection process before each and every trip. If during an inspection a driver is found to have skipped an

inspection, he/she could get a violation and a ding to their CSA score.

- **Operational.** Checking the condition of the vehicle before a trip helps reduce the risk of an on-road breakdown and could prevent an out-of-service violation during an inspection. In other words, as ATBS says, "It keeps you on the road."

- **Financial.** Pretrip inspections often discover problems in their early stage when they are easier and less expensive to repair. We all know the most expensive repair is the one being made at the side of the road.

Pretrip inspections are not excessively time-consuming; 15 to 30 minutes should be enough time to complete them. Fleet maintenance managers can make these inspections easier by having a form that includes a systematic flow around the truck and covers all the required

systems and components.

ATBS has developed a handy checklist that covers engine and front of truck, truck side and rear, coupling devices, cab check and engine start, brake check, and safety equipment check. It is up to fleet management personnel to impress on drivers the importance of these inspections and to ensure compliance. As important is making sure there is a mechanism in place for following up on any problems identified during a pretrip inspection. This is one way to demonstrate management's commitment to fleet safety and respect for drivers.

Pretrip inspections are the law, but perhaps more importantly, they are a way to keep drivers safe and avoid costly on-road breakdowns. And isn't that what we all want? **T**

—Jane Clark, vice president, Member Services for NationalLease