

Satellite-Based CabLink™ Keeps High Country's Trucks on Track

Just as company trucks approached the mountainous pick-up point for their dedicated haul, High Country Transportation's drivers typically lost their cell phone service. With no way to reach his drivers at the freight loading area or along parts of the route, Shawn Crowley, High Country's operations manager, started looking for a satellite-based communications solution.

"We needed a true satellite communications system," Crowley insisted. "Otherwise, we'd be no better off than we were with cell phones."

High Country installed TransCore's CabLink™ in-cab communications system in April, on 24 trucks based in Kirtland, New Mexico. The dedicated fleet hauls coal from mines in the mountains of Colorado to High Country's own rail trans-loading facility in Gallup, New Mexico. High Country, established in 1985 with headquarters in Cortez, Colorado, is a dry bulk and flatbed carrier whose other business units include an over-the-road fleet of 80 trucks and an inhouse freight brokerage.

"We were using cell phones on our dedicated fleet," said Crowley. "But the cellular coverage was no good in the mountains at the mine, and another area on the route also had poor coverage. We needed a way to get in touch with our trucks," he explained.

Because CabLink relies entirely on satellites for in-cab communications and truck tracking, it was a good fit for High Country's needs. The benefits of the satellite-based solution were self-evident, and CabLink proved to be cost-effective.

Costs for the satellite-based system were comparable to cell phone usage, according to Crowley.

"The air time costs almost exactly the same." Hardware costs were similar, too, because cell phones had to be replaced frequently, but the ruggedized CabLink units are durable.

The CabLink units also yielded some unexpected benefits. "Now we have a great way of tracking the drivers' waiting time at the loading points and unloading points," Crowley said. High Country uses the CabLink system's start and stop monitoring feature to track vehicle arrivals and departures. The system helps with fleet management, too.

With CabLink, High Country dispatchers look on the screen to locate all trucks

At a Glance

High Country Transportation, Inc.
Albuquerque, New Mexico
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High Country Transportation, Inc.

Goal:

Improve communications between drivers and dispatchers.

Scope:

24 trucks on a 24-hour, dedicated haul in mountainous terrain

Solution:

TransCore® CabLink™ 100% satellite-based in-cab communications

Results:

Consistent, two-way communication – uninterrupted even in the mountains – plus improved driver productivity and reduced out-of-route miles, for the same cost as cell phones.

in the dedicated fleet. The system also reveals whether trucks are moving or stopped. Dispatchers can view and control the number of trucks at the loading point, which helps to reduce idling and extra miles. This saves fuel and reduces unnecessary engine wear.

CabLink also provides engine performance diagnostics, which helps High Country's fleet managers to identify and correct driver errors that are causing issues with vehicle maintenance.

"We run these trucks 24 hours a day, with two drivers. When we have maintenance problems, we can see where they're coming from," Crowley said. "For example, we can see which driver may have over-revved the engine," he explained.

Monitoring also helps drivers to stay focused. "The drivers know that we can track exactly what they're doing," Crowley explained. "It has increased productivity," he said. CabLink has helped High Country and its drivers to reduce out-of-route miles. CabLink can also be used to monitor other driver behaviors, such as speeding and idling.

Plus, CabLink has led to improvements in High Country's customer service, especially on back hauls. High Country can pinpoint the precise location of every truck, on a moment's notice.

"Back haul customers like to know where their load is and when it's coming in," Crowley said. Overall, CabLink and the TransCore satellite communications solution compare favorably to the Qualcomm system used on High Country's over-the-road fleet, Crowley said.

That fleet of 80 trucks, and High Country's in-house brokerage, rely on TransCore 3sixty load board solution to find exception freight.

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