

GREEN FLEET OF THE MONTH

Playing the green chip



Sustainability is the strategy that guides Frito-Lay's fleet operations

If you think targeting a 50% reduction in fuel consumption and tailpipe emissions by 2020 is a bold goal, you'd be right. So reaching such an aggressive goal, explains Mike O'Connell, requires a broad strategy that involves not just the fleet but the entire supply chain in which it functions. That's why O'Connell, director of fleet operations for snack maker Frito-Lay Inc., says an overarching sustain-

ability strategy is critical to making that happen.

"Sustainability is a comprehensive strategy that doesn't just affect the fleet, it affects the entire com-

pany," he notes. "It covers how we make our products, how we move them, how we manage our facilities and infrastructure, and how we market and support our products."

"On the macro level, Frito-Lay implemented an overall fleet sustainability program that is looking to improve the efficiency of our vehicles and increase the overall miles per gallon," adds Kevin Podmore, fleet capability manager at Frito-Lay. "The ultimate goal is to become the most fuel-efficient fleet in the U.S. To get there, it will require many different initiatives addressing all facets of a fleet."

He says that as part of Frito-Lay's sustainability goals, the company has identified key resources and implemented conservation programs to reduce consumption of these resources—fuel, electricity and water.

Frito-Lay operates 1,100 Class 8

tractors, 4,000 trailers, and some 17,000 medium- and light-duty trucks. From a sustainability perspective, says O'Connell, the company seeks to improve its overall environmental and fuel economy footprint of the fleet by using existing technology as well as testing a variety of experimental systems.

For example, after conducting



Mike O'Connell, director of fleet operations

numerous tests, Frito-Lay found that a diesel-powered Sprinter van offered double the fuel efficiency of its current light-duty route trucks. So the company purchased 1,200 of these vans and incorporated them into the fleet as quickly as possible.

"We achieve [sustainability] by following a three-step program: We study a possible solution; then we pilot-test it; and if it delivers the benefits we need, we implement it," he says. In the end, these efforts translate into cost savings, but again, that goes hand-in-hand with environmental benefits and that makes the program a win on both sides, Podmore explains.

"The ultimate goal for the company is to become the most fuel-efficient fleet in the U.S. To get there,

we are looking at the 'low-hanging fruit' such as asset upgrades, route and asset optimization, operator training, aerodynamics and GPS [as well as] innovative green technologies such as electric trucks and natural gas tractors," he says.

Podmore says that this requires a variety of solutions given the size of Frito-Lay's fleet, the different needs and roles of the vehicles, and the lifecycle of its assets. "Transforming" existing assets where possible, such as trailers, to help reach the company's fuel efficiency and emissions reduction goals is the obvious option. Frito-Lay worked extensively with Kentucky Trailer, its supplier, to improve the aerodynamics of its trailer fleet to boost fuel efficiency.

"To achieve the success we expected, we needed to change our relationship with Kentucky Trailer from customer/vendor to strategic partners," he explains. "We are finding greater success in identifying new ideas and thinking when we work as partners. Working together, we improved the overall end product while ensuring sustainability [remained] an integral part."

That tactic covers a range of technologies. "We have leveraged new technologies, such as no-idle systems, auto tire inflation and trailer fairings. By increasing efficiencies and miles per gallon, there are multiple benefits," Podmore points out. "This program has an environmental benefit and financial benefit, which is the combination that makes programs like this sustainable, so it's good for the business and it's good for the environment."

—SEAN KILCARR