

1996 SOUTHEASTERN STATES EQUIPMENT MANAGERS MEETING

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SUMMARY

The 10th Annual Southeastern States Equipment Managers meeting was held April 15-18 in Frankfort Kentucky. Twelve states were represented with 23 attendees. Arkansas was the only state not attending due to a freeze in travel. Industry representatives and representatives from the attending states discussed the following topics.

- *Alternate Fuel Vehicles* - A subject of continuing interest is alternate fuel vehicles. Input was provided from both Navistar and Ford on their plans for medium duty trucks. Both indicated that most of their development efforts were aimed at natural gas, which both considered the most cost effective of the alternate fuel options. All in attendance expressed concern over the lack of infrastructure to support refueling for alternate fuel vehicles. It was also generally agreed that there were no totally advantageous alternate fuels. With the exception of Texas, most southeastern states are taking a go-slow, wait and see approach to alternate fuel vehicles.

- *Annual Inspection of Aerial Trucks* - The Mississippi representative presented an interesting report on different states' efforts to comply with inspection requirements for aerial trucks. Six states have in existence, or are developing a contract for annual inspection services from an independent testing agency. Although all states had a keen interest in annual inspections, some have not taken action to implement these inspections.

- *Contractor Operated Warehouses* - Kentucky briefed on their experience with contractor warehouses operated by NAPA. The concept is similar to that operated by the federal government on military installations. Contractor operation of warehouses requires some significant volume and the group discussion voiced many pros and cons to such a concept.

- *Flat Rate Standards for Heavy Equipment* - Champion and John Deere presented an interesting briefing on flat rate standards that are available for heavy equipment. These standards patterned after automotive flat rates are available from both Champion and John Deere. John Deere also provided the group with information and a catalog of videos that can be used for service and safety training.

- *New Product Evaluation* - Texas provided the attendees with an overview of their procedures for product evaluation. They provided their written policy and application form for new product consideration. Texas also shared their research on so called "gas saving" products. The bottom line on these products was that they either didn't work or could not pass EPA clean air standards.

- *800 MHz Communications System* - Kentucky shared their experience with their 1-800 trunking communications system. Most states related interest within their DOT for such systems. The advantages and flexibility of these systems were discussed along with the massive capital investment required.

- *Standard Vehicle Colors* - The Mississippi representative presented a comparative study that his state had done on equipment painting. The scope of this study was nationwide. While white is increasing in use, the various orange and yellow colors are still high demand colors in some states for work zone vehicles. As in past discussions, suggestions for standardization were met with heated opposition.

- *Vehicle Buy-back* - Louisiana reported on their buy back program and the results of the past year. They have mowing tractors, graders, and trac and rubber tire backhoes under this program. All equipment is on a 100% or greater buy back except for the trac backhoes. Louisiana feels this is an extremely effective program providing new equipment at low cost, and requires only increased coordination/control efforts to manage the program.

- *Equipment Utilization* - South Carolina presented a study they had done comparing management techniques for controlling vehicle utilization. This covered reporting systems, utilization standards, management responses to high and low utilization, and actual utilization for selected equipment.

- *Comparison of Fleet Operations* - Florida reported on an extensive survey that they have done on comparing fleet operations throughout the southeast. The study covered organizational layout, tasks/responsibilities, manning, information systems, specifications, department demographic information and response to numerous opinion questions. This data related to all organizational

levels. Due to the magnitude of this study some of the results will be held over and reported on at the next regional meeting.

▪ *Petroleum Product Specification Comparison* - Georgia representatives presented a study they had compiled of specification requirements for petroleum products. There was great interest from the group in viewing other states contracts. There also was an extended discussion on how to specify motor oils so that a quality product could be obtained. All participants agreed to require that the vendor product be certified and stamped as an API Licensed Product.

SPECIAL TOUR

The meeting location offered an excellent opportunity to visit the Ford truck plant in Louisville. This was an

informative tour and a chance for all to talk to production facility managers. It also provided a close-up look at Ford's new Louisville line of trucks.

PLANS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The 1997 meeting will be held in Panama City, Florida about a month later than this year's meeting. We have had significant turnover in personnel within our group and it is encouraging to see that the new people value these meetings as much as the original representatives did.