



ROADSIDEREADER

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT TRUCKERS

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A Day in the Cab

Long-haul day starts before wheels turn.

On a map, 500 miles is a line between two points. On paper, it might be eight or nine hours of driving. From the cab of a tractor-trailer, though, those miles come with weather, traffic, construction zones, loading docks, tight turns, and thousands of other drivers doing things that cannot always be predicted.

We see the package on the porch, the produce in the grocery store, the new appliance being unloaded, or the raw material arriving at a factory. We rarely see the person who spent the better part of a day getting it there.

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The Million-Mile Club

Road rules – one mile at a time.

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Everything Rides on a Truck

We depend on you at the wheel.



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History of Trucking

You'll be surprised at these factoids + Sudoku



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A Day in the Cab

**A long-haul day starts before the wheels turn
and rarely ends when the mileage does.**

Five hundred miles looks different through a windshield.

On a map, it is a line between two points. On paper, it might be eight or nine hours of driving. From the cab of a tractor-trailer, though, those miles come with weather, traffic, construction zones, loading docks, tight turns, and thousands of other drivers doing things that cannot always be predicted.

And the day starts long before the truck rolls. A professional driver begins with the truck itself. Tires have to be checked. Lights, brakes, hoses, connections, mirrors, and fluid levels matter. So does the trailer. A problem found in a parking lot is an inconvenience. The same problem discovered at highway speed can become something much worse.

Then comes the road. Modern trucks are comfortable compared with the rigs drivers ran decades ago, but nobody should mistake comfortable for easy. A driver may spend most of the day sitting down, yet there is nothing passive about guiding tens of thousands of pounds through interstate traffic.

Cars slip into stopping distance. Construction lanes narrow without much warning. Rain changes everything. Wind catches the side of an empty trailer. Somewhere ahead, somebody

hits the brakes. The driver has to see trouble before trouble gets there.

Then there is the clock. Federal hours-of-service rules govern how long commercial drivers can remain behind the wheel, and those limits shape the day. Traffic does not care about the clock. Neither does a warehouse running behind schedule.

A driver can arrive on time and still spend hours waiting to load or unload. Those lost hours do not magically appear again down the road.

Neither does parking. By late afternoon and evening, truck stops and rest areas can begin filling. Finding a legal, safe place to put a tractor-trailer for the night is something most motorists never have to consider. For drivers, it can shape the final hour or two of the day.

Meals often happen wherever the road allows. Phone calls home fit between stops. Birthdays, ballgames, school programs, and ordinary Tuesday nights keep happening while the truck is several states away.

That is the part of trucking a shipping label does not show.

We see the package on the porch, the produce in the grocery store, the new appliance being unloaded, or the raw material arriving at a factory. We rarely see the person who spent the better part of a day getting it there.

Five hundred miles can include a sunrise in one state and supper in another. It can mean a good road, a rough road, or a little of both.

Tomorrow morning, the driver checks the truck again.

Then the line on the map starts becoming miles.





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The Million-Mile Club

Veteran truck drivers have watched the roads, the rigs, and the job itself change – one mile at a time.

A million miles is hard to picture.

Drive around the Earth roughly 40 times and you are getting close. Go from New York to Los Angeles and back, then do it again, and again, and keep doing it for years.

For veteran truck drivers, a million miles is not geography so much as accumulated mornings. It is headlights before daylight. Winter roads. Summer construction. Bad coffee. Good diners that disappeared years ago. Loading docks remembered by the turn before the sign. Towns watched through a windshield as bypasses, warehouses, subdivisions, and interstates changed around them.

Ask an experienced driver what a million miles teaches, and the answer probably will not begin with horsepower. It begins with patience.

You learn not to be in a hurry when the road says otherwise. You learn that the car darting into your lane may have no idea how much room a loaded truck needs to stop. You learn to watch several vehicles ahead instead of staring at the bumper directly in front of you.

Mostly, you learn that getting there safely beats getting there quickly.

The job itself has changed. Drivers who started decades ago remember paper maps folded across steering wheels and directions scribbled on scraps of paper. Dispatch once came by pay phone, pager, or radio. Today, GPS systems, electronic logging devices, satellite communication, and sophisticated truck technology keep drivers connected almost everywhere.

The equipment has changed, too. Trucks are quieter and more comfortable. Safety systems can warn drivers about lane departures and vehicles ahead. Engines and transmissions have become smarter.

But the road still gets the final word. Fog still settles into low places. Ice still forms on bridges first. Wind still pushes a trailer around. Somebody still misses an exit and makes a bad decision trying to recover.

That is where experience earns its keep. Veteran drivers often notice little things before anyone else does: a car drifting within its lane, brake lights appearing over the next rise, a change in the feel of the truck, or clouds ahead that say the weather forecast did not tell the whole story.

None of that comes from an owner's manual. Neither does life on the road. Longtime drivers know where to find decent food after midnight and which parking lots fill first. They know that a friendly shipping clerk can rescue a bad day. They know home sounds different over the telephone after several nights away.

A million miles leaves stories behind. Some are funny. Some are frightening. Most would not mean much to anybody who has never lived with one hand on a steering wheel and tomorrow's delivery somewhere over the horizon.

During National Truck Driver Appreciation Week, the mileage deserves recognition. So does the wisdom it took to get there.

*WHERE
is Gizmo?*

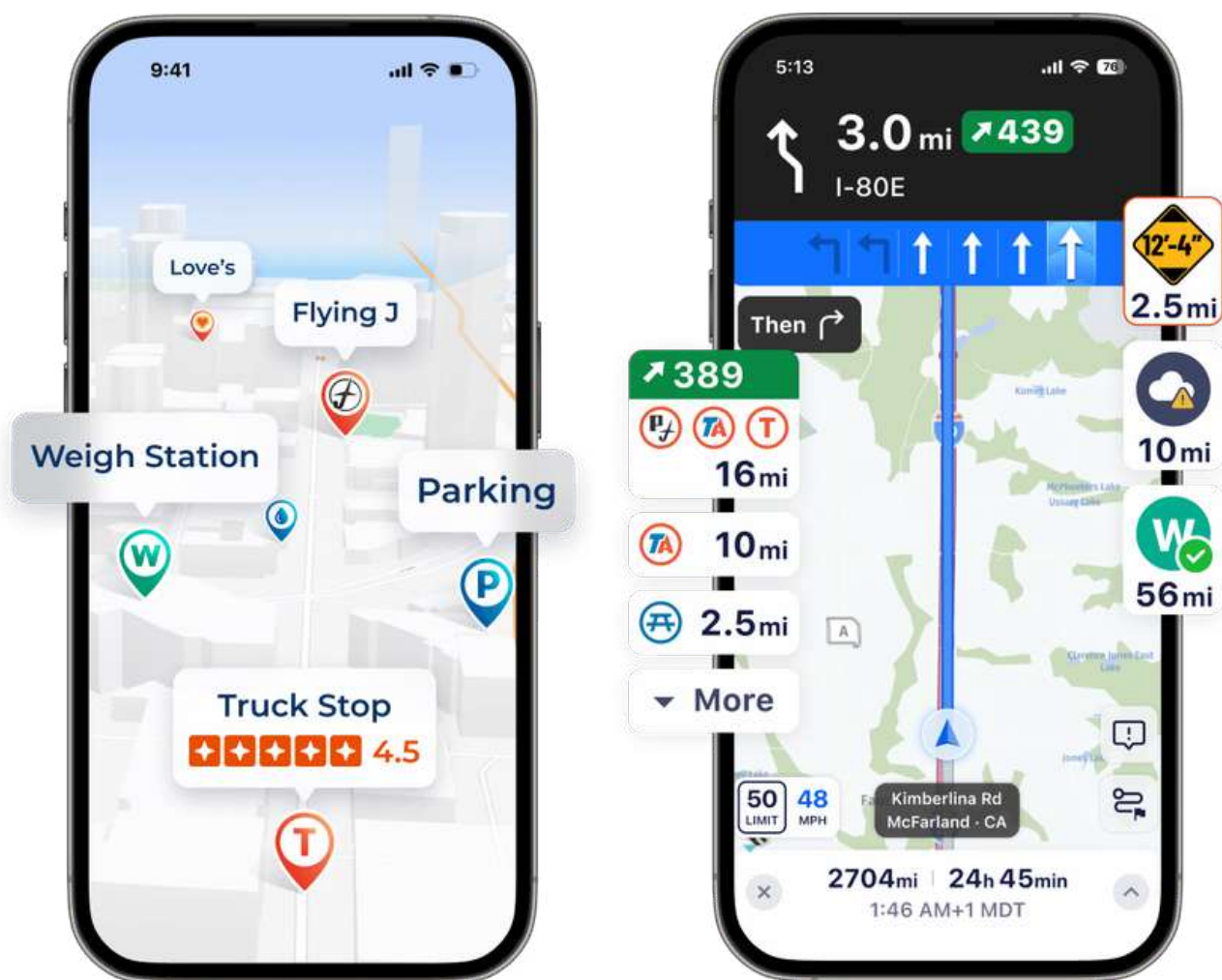


This summer, keep your eyes peeled for Gizmo, NAIT's furry mascot. He'll be out on the road, wagging his way across the miles. Spot him? Don't paws – snap a pic, send it our way!

mona.brimeyer@naitusa.com

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Everything Rides on a Truck

From groceries to building materials, everything we use depends on somebody behind the wheel.

Take a look around the room. The coffee cup. The television. The medicine in the cabinet. The refrigerator humming in the kitchen. The lumber inside the walls.

Somewhere along the way, a truck was involved. Usually several of them.

That coffee may have crossed an ocean before reaching a port, but a truck carried it away from the dock. Another may have hauled it to a roasting plant. Another moved the finished product to a distribution center, and another delivered it to the store.

By the time somebody pours the first cup of the morning, a long chain of people has already done its work. Truck drivers are among the links we notice least.

The same is true at the grocery store. Apples, milk, cereal, meat, frozen food, paper towels, detergent, and pet food do not simply appear on shelves overnight. Somebody brought them there.

Hospitals and pharmacies depend on trucks. So do construction crews. Manufacturers need parts coming in and finished goods going out. Restaurants need food. Farmers need equipment, seed, fertilizer, and fuel. Retail stores need inventory.

Even the trucks themselves depend on other trucks delivering tires, parts, oil, glass, steel, and electronics. It is easy to forget because freight usually moves quietly.

Most of us do not wake up wondering whether the grocery store's distribution truck made its delivery. We notice trucking when traffic slows behind a tractor-trailer, when one needs room to turn, or when we pass a long line of rigs on the interstate.

What we do not see is what would happen if they stopped. Store shelves would begin thinning. Manufacturing lines would slow as parts disappeared. Construction projects would wait on materials. Restaurants would run short of ingredients. Medical facilities would start watching supplies more carefully.

Modern life runs on complicated supply chains, but somewhere near the end of nearly every one is a steering wheel and somebody holding it.

That somebody may have started the day before sunrise. The driver may have slept hundreds of miles from home, checked the truck in a dark parking lot, driven through rain, waited at a crowded dock, then squeezed a 53-foot trailer behind a store most customers enter without ever noticing the loading area.

By afternoon, the freight is on a shelf. By evening, it is in somebody's house. That is trucking at its best: almost invisible because everything worked.

National Truck Driver Appreciation Week gives us a reason to notice the people behind that ordinary miracle.

Look around your home again. The furniture, food, clothes, tools, medicine, electronics, and nearly everything else have traveled farther than we usually think about.

Somewhere in that journey was a truck. And behind its wheel was a driver making sure the rest of us had what we needed.





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Life Insurance Awareness Month

PROTECT TODAY. KEEP TOMORROW ON THE ROAD.

Being your own boss on the road doesn't come with a benefits package. No HR department, no open enrollment reminder — life insurance is one more thing you handle yourself, which usually means it'll get done later.

September is Life Insurance Awareness Month — a good time to actually look at coverage. Whether it's final expenses, leaving something behind, or one less thing to worry about on the road, it's worth having in place before you need it.



The good part:

As an NAIT member or independent trucker, you have access to **guaranteed-issue coverage** — no health questions or exams required. A current or past condition or years on the road won't keep you from getting covered.

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Sudoku

The goal is to fill a 9x9 grid with digits 1 through 9, ensuring each digit appears only once in each row, column, and 3x3 subgrid.

Did You Know ...

- Early trucking was mostly short-haul work. In the early 1900s, trucks were generally better suited to cities and moving farm goods to railheads or nearby markets than hauling freight across states.
- Mack's first truck arrived in 1905. The company's first Mack-branded vehicle was actually a passenger bus in 1900. Its first truck followed five years later.
- Truck weight laws are more than a century old. Several states began setting truck-weight limits in 1913. By 1933, every state had some form of truck size or weight regulation.
- Trucks proved their worth during World War I. Before the war, railroads handled most long-distance freight. When the U.S. entered World War I in 1917, overwhelmed railroads helped push trucks into interstate freight hauling on a much larger scale. British soldiers helped give Mack its bulldog identity. During World War I, British troops reportedly nicknamed Mack trucks "Bulldogs" because of their durability and tenacity. The image stuck.
- Refrigerated trucking changed what America ate. Frederick McKinley Jones developed a successful mobile refrigeration system and received a patent in 1940. His technology eventually allowed meat, dairy products, produce, and other perishables to travel hundreds of miles without relying on ice and salt.
- The Interstate Highway System transformed trucking. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 launched the modern Interstate System, giving trucks faster, more reliable routes between major markets and helping long-distance trucking compete far more effectively with rail.
- Trucking was heavily deregulated in 1980. The Motor Carrier Act of 1980 reduced federal restrictions on routes, rates, and entry into the business. It helped reshape the industry and encouraged the growth of modern truckload carriers and more flexible freight networks.