

Trucks go Techie

By Tara Marion

To meet government and industry association regulatory requirements, trucking companies are using state-of-the-art telecommunications to track cargo and ensure fast and secure delivery of shipments.

Trucking companies can now keep track of tractors and trailers through satellites. Both **Gainey Transportation Services** in Grand Rapids and **Holland Special Delivery** in Hudsonville have invested in the Qualcomm brand of satellite equipment, which enables them to communicate with drivers and protect cargo.

"It also provides us the ability to provide proof of delivery," said Jim Albers, CEO of Holland Special Delivery. "We're able to alert the customer that the shipment has been delivered, and who signed for the shipment, so the customer can complete his business transaction."

Molex Inc., an Illinois manufacturer of electronic, electrical and fiber-optic interconnection products and systems, recently introduced the FaxEnable line of services, which allows mobile faxing from trucks. This will permit truckers to quickly process bills of lading," said Tamara Wilson, vice president and chief information officer at Gainey.

The bill of lading is a document that establishes the terms of a contract between a shipper and a transportation company. Usually prepared by the shipper on forms issued by the carrier, it serves as a document of title, a contract of carriage and a receipt for goods.

"The BOL is the primary document that is required in order for a trucking company to be paid," Wilson explained. To get that information ... quickly saves a tremendous amount of time, and time in our industry is absolutely money."

Another new technology being considered by Holland Special Delivery relates to electronically transmitting shipment information and monitoring the status of shipments.

Albers said customers want visibility of their product wherever it is in the supply chain.

"They want to see whether it's at their suppliers or on the truck. They want to see it's on the road. They want to see it in their plant," he explained.

"And then it goes to finished product and out it goes to their customer, so visibility is probably the biggest thing on the technology side and that we're investing in it."

Careful not to divulge too much information, Wilson said Gainey has implemented a security measure at **Aero Bulk Carrier Inc.** in Grand Rapids to prevent unauthorized access to trucks that carry hazardous materials.

"Propane, as you well know, can be a bomb if it were used in the wrong way," she explained.

"We have a solution that we've implemented into the trucks where the truck has to have a password put into its Qualcomm unit before it recognizes that that is the driver of the truck."

Automated hours-of-service logs record driving, on-duty, off-duty and sleeper berth time and may soon gain popularity over manual records.

"We look forward to them being automated," Wilson said. "Then everybody gets put on the same playing field."