

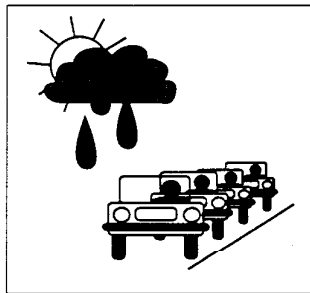
# Strong truck management keeps you rolling

*Best practices, new technology help*

By Janet M. Callahan

**L**evels of profitability within the asphalt construction market vary with how cost effectively a contractor can run production and paving operations. One area which requires constant attention and examination is truck management. As a contractor, how you plan and manage trucking operations in the field and within your yard can greatly affect your bottom line. Here are a few tips for more profitable truck management:

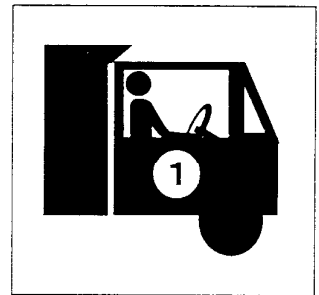
**Level of control:** If you think about it, a contractor's control over truck operations extends only to trucks in the yard or at the paver. Beyond that, you are at the mercy of outside elements — traffic, road conditions, or the driver which determine how quickly or promptly your trucks arrive at their proper destination. Therefore, you must be extremely conscious of the rotation of trucks in the yard: Make sure they spend the least amount of time possible in load-



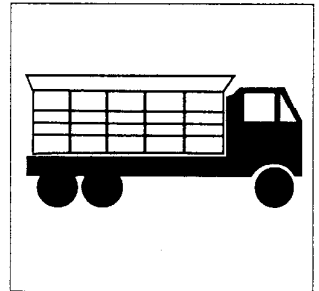
ing so they can get to the job as quickly as possible. Time spent non-productively costs you money.

## Choosing the lead driver:

Choose your lead driver carefully. Truckers follow their leader and generally do not divert from the lineup established at the beginning of the day. If you assign a strong and focused lead driver, one who will keep the pace constant throughout the day, the trucks will move smoothly.



**Truck selection:** Planning for your field work also involves making sure you have the right size truck for the particular job. On many city jobs, it is impossible to maneuver trailers or larger vehicles through the tight city streets. In this case, you need to remember to schedule triaxles or even smaller vehicles. They will reach the job in the time allotment you have laid out in your schedule.



**Product enhancements:** Cab-operated load covers and vibrators on tail boxes are a few of the products available which can provide you with additional operation efficiency as well as improved material distribution to the field operations. Cab-operated load covers allow the driver to begin covering the loaded material as soon as the vehicle leaves the loading area. The driver is no longer required to leave the vehicle to crank down the cover. Using this equipment provides the driver and contractor with a safer and more efficient

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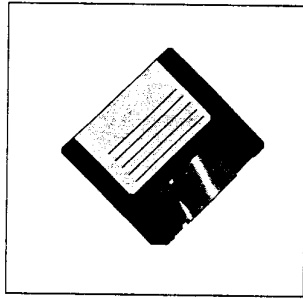
work environment. The cost of these covers ranges from \$2000 to \$3500.

Adding vibrators to the tail box of the trailer helps ensure all the mix is removed from the trailer and deposited into the paver. Material does not remain in the truck, and therefore, the pace quickens at the paver as the material is dropped. Vibrators price between \$500 and \$800.

### Computer program advancements:

Developments in computer programs and software enhancements have provided the asphalt industry the opportunity to more closely manage production/accounting operations. Automatic ticketing and accounting systems are now widely accepted as an essential component of plant operations. Programs are numerous, and depending on your individual needs, you can find one that will work effectively for your operation.

Ticketing software that interfaces with your loadout programs is also available. However, the true progress

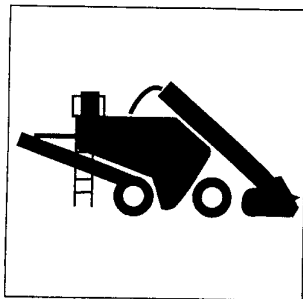
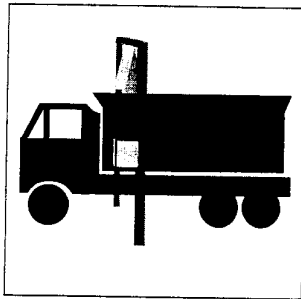


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components interface with material handler software. The system automatically transmits the truck tag information to the plant loadout system.

Because the driver need not leave his vehicle until he picks up his ticket, total yard time for truck and driver is reduced significantly. If an automatic billing or ticketing system is in place, the driver never leaves his vehicle at all. Minutes saved are multiplied by the number of trucks passing through the yard each day, week, or year.

The entrance of material transfer vehicles into paving operations has allowed contractors to increase paving production, improve the quality of hot mix mat smoothness, and reduce material hauling costs. With this system in place, production capacities increase because the material is fed



being made in the automatic billing is with a program which interfaces with other standard and specialized accounting and ticketing programs already in place.

If you have four or more plants, integrating this program into your operations can be extremely profitable, because the system can process automatic invoices, track internal costing, maintain and track current inventory levels of raw material, as well as provide important payable information for vendor trucks.

Using good accounting and automatic ticketing programs within your operations can alleviate the heavy paperwork traditionally managed by clerical teams within paving administrative operations. Overhead and personnel costs are reduced simply because the paper trail has diminished.

### Advanced technology checks trucking costs

Research indicates trucking costs have escalated 13 percent in most areas of the country over the past five years. They are likely to continue along those lines, with a 2 to 3 percent increase per year. In the northeast, hourly rates are between \$50 and \$65. That is \$1± per minute! Making the most of your time is key to the bottom line.

There is an automatic truck body lubrication and vehicle identification system on the market designed to reduce trucking costs. It covers the truck body with an ample supply of lubricant as its vehicle identification

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in a continuous manner. This eliminates stop and go paving, and reduces segregation of the mix.

Material handling costs are reduced because trucks cycle quicker on the job site, so the total number of trucks required for sustained asphalt delivery is reduced. A load can dump within a minute to a minute and a half. A hopper can store 25 to 30 tons (22.5 to 27 metric tons) while the paver holds 30 tons (27 metric tons).

Contractors can find this type of equipment most beneficial when they work with a high production HMA plant. Larger trucks can be used more efficiently, and waiting time on the job site is significantly reduced or eliminated.

### Automation is the key

Automating the asphalt plant production process can positively affect your field paving operation. Plant production must be matched to paving operations to realize significant savings. With little or no down time in truck movement to and from a job, the field foreman knows material will arrive and dump into the paver in a specific number of minutes. Again, the paving train need never stop.

Truck management is imperative to the success of any project. Take a good look at how you're managing your operations. There are plenty of opportunities to make your business more cost-effective, and better management of your trucking costs can prove quite beneficial.

Write in 998 for more information.