



Farm to Carton – Milky Way Always Delivers

Kenworth T680s Help Drivers Deliver Milk on Time

LYNDEN, Wash. – From farm to the refrigerator, the production of fresh milk is a 24/7 operation. For Milky Way, one of the largest bulk milk haulers in the Pacific Northwest, that means its fleet of 300 tractors and tankers are on the road 24/7. There’s never a day off.



Kenworth T680 Day Cab

Since its founding in 1948 in Lynden, Washington, Milky Way has steadily grown its operation from its days serving rural Whatcom County – about 100 miles north of Seattle. Today, the company collects milk from about 500 farms throughout Washington, Idaho, Oregon and Montana, and delivers to 15 to 20 production plants throughout the region. Milky Way has 22 terminals in order to stay close to farm locations.



Kenworth T680 Day Cab

For the last two years, the company has been “beefing” up its fleet with Kenworth T680 day cabs, purchased through Papé Kenworth Northwest. The company has added a number of T680s, with the 2017 order featuring the PACCAR MX-13 engine, rated at up to 480 horsepower. “But, with that initial order, we also spec’d two T680s with the MX-11 engine, rated at 430 horsepower,” said Dave Seaman, Milky Way’s director of equipment and maintenance. “We wanted to test the engines to see how they would perform in our operation. Weight savings means a great deal to us, and being 400 pounds lighter. That’s huge.”



Kenworth T680 Day Cab

According to Seaman, the PACCAR MX-11 impressed Milky Way so much, its subsequent order in 2018 were all spec’d with that engine – each rated at 430 horsepower and equipped with Eaton Fuller Advantage® 10-speed transmissions.

Since farms can only hold fresh milk for a few hours, a breakdown of equipment en route to pick up milk can prove disastrous. Dependable service is what helps separate Milky Way from its competitors.

“What we do is not for everyone,” said Jason Jansen, president of Milky Way, part of the Lynden family of companies. “You have to give credit where it’s due. Our drivers are incredible. No matter what the weather throws at them they always make it to the farm for pickup. Putting our drivers in reliable equipment is also part of the equation, and we think we have the best and most productive fleet in the industry.”

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Typically, a Milky Way tractor will pull dual trailers. The state-of-the-art stainless steel tankers used by Milky Way aren't off the shelf; they're manufactured by the company itself to ensure the highest standards of quality are met.

According to Jansen, a driver may visit five or more farms in a day depending upon the territory. Since drivers typically travel less than 500 miles a day, the majority of drivers operate day cabs since they're home every night. But, in areas like Klamath Falls, Oregon, hauls are longer and sleepers are required.

While providing comfortable trucks for its drivers is a high priority, productivity is as well. Jansen said he's seeing both with the Kenworth T680. He pointed to the PACCAR MX-11 engine as having a significant impact. "When we tested the initial two trucks, we had them on a line-haul from Yakima, Washington, going over White Pass with deliveries to Centralia," he said. "Since we consistently haul at the legal weight limit, we wanted to see if we could cut down the weight of the truck, but still have enough power to haul their max load."



PACCAR MX-11 Engine

The results? "Outstanding. With the PACCAR MX-11, we are able to cut 400 pounds from the weight of the truck...meaning we can haul an additional 400 pounds of milk," Jansen said. "We have the power we need, we are getting better fuel economy, and our drivers love the trucks. It's a win-win."

Since the experiment proved to be a success, Milky Way has ordered nearly 100 Kenworth T680s powered by PACCAR MX-11 engines and will continue to run with that engine. Other lightweight specs, including the use of super single tires, save about 1,500 additional pounds. "We're never done looking at ways to save weight," said Jansen. "We like to try new things and turn over every rock to see where we can trim pounds. We feel how we spec trucks is one of our competitive advantages."



Milky Way Kenworth T680 Driver Scott Polindar

"I love driving the T680," said Scott Polindar, a veteran Milky Way driver. "It's easily the best truck I've ever driven, and I've been driving for Milky Way for nearly 35 years. The drivability of the T680 is outstanding and the PACCAR MX-11 engine provides plenty of torque getting up hills. Kenworth's T680 is top-of-the-line and I'm happy Milky Way added more to the fleet."



Milky Way Kenworth T680 Driver Scott Polindar

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According to Seaman, the support Milky Way receives from “Papé Kenworth Northwest has made a difference. “We’ve received excellent support during the spec’ing process,” he said. “It’s also how you are supported after the sale that really makes a difference. Kenworth and Papé help us achieve improved utilization, fuel economy, driver acceptance, safety and lower maintenance costs. Papé is making a difference for us; we have developed a strong partnership and look forward to a successful future with them.”

When it comes to downtime, new technology is helping Milky Way. Backed by Kenworth TruckTech+® Remote Diagnostics, the milk hauler receives immediate diagnostics when a fault code comes on regarding the engine or aftertreatment system. Rather than pull over and call in for support, drivers can continue on their route if they know it’s a minor issue and something that won’t damage the engine.



KENWORTH
TRUCKTECH+
Remote Diagnostics

“Kenworth TruckTech+ is beneficial in addressing fault codes and locating the closest dealer support on the map if needed,” explained Seaman. “This program makes it easier for us to keep trucks on the road.”

And, when the trucks are at a Milky Way shop, technician Antonio Cardenas, operating out of Sunnyside, Washington, said the PACCAR MX engines are a plus for maintenance. “Performing our PMs on the engine is easier than other brands,” he said. “The oil filters and fuel filters are accessible. The Kenworth T680 is mechanic-friendly. The components are all accessible and the engine’s software is user friendly. It’s easy to hook up our computer to check for fault codes.”

While on the road, the trucks Milky Way operates project the positive image the company likes. Milky Way drivers have a sense of pride while driving, and keeping the truck looking nice has become standard. “We all take pride in what we do,” said Jansen. “We represent our customers and we feel our tractors and trailers are moving billboards. They show that we’re all about quality from top to bottom.”

The focus on quality, and working for a company that puts drivers first, has helped Milky Way achieve an enviable record when it comes to driver turnover. “One of our drivers, Tom Bera, told us he really appreciates the roominess and comfort of T680, as well as the great visibility made possible by the large windshield,” said Jansen.

“We’ve heard numerous comments just like that from our other drivers. I think part of the reason we are well below the industry average in terms of driver turnover is because we provide our drivers with trucks they enjoy driving,” Jansen said. “All of our equipment is relatively new and well spec’d, and we work closely with our drivers to ensure their voice is heard. In this business, you can’t be sidelined due to mechanical issues. We didn’t miss any pickups last year and the Kenworth T680s have been solid for us.”

SIDEBAR: Showing the Past to Reinforce the Future



From left, are a Kenworth T680 day cab and 1956 Kenworth.

Five years ago, Milky Way discovered one of its early-decommissioned trucks in Seattle, and it was showing its age. The truck, a 1956 single-axle Kenworth tractor called #39, was purchased back and a six-month restoration began, led by Guy Jansen.

With help from Lynden Tank Company, Steven Blankenforth, Blue Star Welding, Maple Leaf Auto and the Lynden truck shop, the truck transformed into its former self. It’s a virtual show truck. Nowadays, the truck can be seen at fairs in Whatcom County and at Lynden employee appreciation events.

Back in the day, the truck was one of the first to use semi-trailers to transport milk from Whatcom County dairy farms to Seattle area processing plants.

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