



Relocates To Kenworth W990 with U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree Nears Tour Completion, Heads To Washington, D.C.

KIRKLAND, Wash. – The 55th U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree – a 60-foot Blue Spruce from New Mexico’s Carson National Forest – is on its way to Washington, D.C., following its Nov. 6 harvesting near Red River, New Mexico.



The Carson National Forest Service nominated 12 trees as candidates for the special honor, with representatives from the Architect of the Capitol selecting the 2019 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree. The special Blue Spruce, which will be displayed on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., is the perfect representation of the Carson National Forest, according to Ricardo Martinez, Carson National Forest deputy district ranger.



“The tree selected is beautiful and perfectly symmetrical – it’s what you look for in a Christmas tree,” said Martinez. “The Carson National Forest is a special place, and the Blue Spruce that will be on display during the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree Tour en route to Washington D.C., will help put New Mexico and its forests in the national spotlight. We’re proud to send this beautiful tree to the Capitol.”



On hand and ready for the load was a Kenworth W990, along with members from Artesia, New Mexico-based Wilbanks Trucking Service, this year’s designated hauler of the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree.

The company’s representatives at the tree harvesting ceremony featured Shane Phipps, safety director; and Josh Rice, terminal facility and crane manager at Wilbanks Trucking Service location in Hobbs, New Mexico, along with several other employees. The company specializes in heavy haul and crane services, and provided the cranes and crane operators for the tree harvesting.



From left, representing Wilbanks Trucking Services, are: Danny Orris, production manager; Josh Garcia, one of three Kenworth W990 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree drivers; Jeremy Rice, field intendent; and Josh Rice, first W990 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree driver.

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The Kenworth W990 transporting the tree features a distinctive graphics package that showcases the New Mexico state flag, along with Ship Rock, a 7,177 foot-high mountain rock that resembles a 19th century clipper ship. On the door and sleeper, the U.S. Capitol Building is shown with a Christmas tree, with the wording: “From the Land of Enchantment to Enchanting the Nation” written above the graphics.



“It’s hard to put into words what it means to me to be a part of such a special delivery,” said Rice. “I look forward to participating in the tree tour and sharing the experience with the other drivers who help transport the tree.”

Once in Red River, the tree was fitted with a special 40-gallon water bladder to keep it hydrated during the transport. Final preparations were then made for the cross-country haul.



Once the tree was lifted and set on the 82-foot trailer, Rice, who supervised the crane operation, drove the Kenworth W990 to Red River just a mile away from the harvest site. Rice is one of three Wilbanks Trucking Services employees who is driving the W990 and deliver the tree to Washington D.C.



“This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience,” said Phipps. “We’re proud to be responsible for transporting the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree and participate in community events along the path to the Capitol. We look forward to seeing the tree standing tall at the lighting ceremony.”



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Featuring a 76-inch mid-rod sleeper, the W990 was spec'd with the PACCAR Powertrain – a PACCAR MX-13 engine rated at 455-hp and 1,650 lb-ft of torque, 12-speed automated transmission, and 40K tandem rear axle. The truck was also specified with the Limited Edition interior, premium GT703 seats and audio system, Kenworth Nav+HD, predictive cruise control, 1800W inverter, 180-degree swivel passenger seat, and Kenworth TruckTech+® remote diagnostics.



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The tour will end Nov. 24 at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland, before the tree is delivered to the U.S. Capitol in late November. A special tree lighting ceremony on Dec. 4 will be hosted by the Architect of the Capitol, in conjunction with the U.S. Speaker of the House.



For more information, visit the 2019 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree web site – www.capitolchristmastree.com. Choose Outdoors, a non-profit organization that works with the Forest Service on promoting outdoor recreation and public access to federal lands for recreation, assists with coordinating the annual tour.



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