

Thompson Emergency Freight Systems: High standards, superior performance... time tested

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For shippers and receivers who need time-sensitive freight moved across the U.S.-Canadian border, Thompson Emergency Freight Systems is often a life-saver.

Based in Tecumseh, Ontario, (close to the Ambassador bridge) Thompson has been in business for almost 30-years and has earned the reputation as a leader within the cross-border expedite transportation industry (their core business is serving the automotive industry).

The foundation of that reputation, of course, is Thompson's Owner-Operator partners — the drivers who get that freight where it's supposed to be, when it's supposed to be there.

Thompson prides itself on being the best, and on having the best Owner-Operators.

"Running the border requires different levels of certification, and our standard is very high," said Mark Bortolotti, Thompson's recruiting manager. "We only recruit drivers who are 'FAST-approved.' It's an acronym for "Free And Secure Trade", which allows you to cross the border quicker. The problem is, the vast majority of truckers on the road don't have a FAST card, and they can't get one. At Thompson, all of our drivers are FAST-approved."

Thompson's drivers are also experienced, have clean driving abstracts and are good communicators, which Bortolotti said is appreciated by the company's customers.

"If you're focused on the cross-border expedite market, you really want to meet the highest level of standards that governments require," Bortolotti said. "Every one of our drivers is holding a FAST card and has at least one year of over-the-road experience."

"We're proud of where we're at. We want to grow, but we want to do it responsibly, by bringing on quality drivers one at a time and working hard not to lose the ones we have."

Thompson is a family-owned company and Bortolotti said the company takes pride in the longevity of its employees and the culture it has established. "Our office staff are veterans, the average tenure with the company is 12-years," he said. "As a result, whether it's dealing with customers, or drivers — and I hear this all the time from people — we're credited with being very knowledgeable and helpful."

Thompson's fleet size is significant, which makes them relevant to large purchasers of cross-border transportation, like Domestic and Foreign owned Auto Manufactures, but it's not so big that you're a number," Bortolotti said. "Everybody knows everybody on a first-name basis. Everybody treats each other with respect."

Safety and performance are top priorities for Thompson, as well.

"We have won numerous awards over the years for on-time performance," Bortolotti said. "If you asked our customers about us, they would tell you that what sets us apart is our ability to get the job done — hence, the 'EMERGENCY' in our name."

"In addition to the many service awards from our key customers, we've also won a lot of safety awards," Bortolotti said. "We were just awarded 'Platinum Status' from Markel Insurance (Canada's largest trucking

insurer), based on our longstanding fleet safety record. This is a very rare status, which represents <5 percent of their entire customer base.”

Thompson achieves its outstanding performance and safety records by working with the top Owner-Operators and by providing solid training.

“We pay our drivers very well,” Bortolotti said. “Their annual income is generally at the top of the industry curve. Additionally, we offer significant in-house training when drivers start at orientation, followed-up by regular meetings, so our drivers are always kept up to date. In fact, we offer safety bonuses to our drivers annually”

Thompson also ensures its Owner-Operators have access to top technology.

“We track all of our equipment real time, which is what our customers require,” Bortolotti said. “But we’ve moved away from the big and expensive GPS satellites (that are actually fixed on the roof of the truck) to handheld communication devices. Our drivers communicate with the office via mike and/or cell phone from anywhere. They can also communicate via e-mail, text, and the GPS tracking device is embedded in the phone, which is a lot less expensive. We really pride ourselves on being ahead of the technology curve, but not to the point that we’re burdening our drivers with extra costs. Anytime you can reduce the expense side of the equation to Owner-Operators, you’re helping out your workforce.”

Thompson’s longevity and experience with cross-border expediting also benefits its Owner-Operators, in that the company knows how to handle the tricky logistics associated with moving freight back and forth between Canada and the United States.

“We’ve been at it for so long now that we’ve set the standard,” Bortolotti said.

Shippers have come to count on Thompson, especially in today’s economy when manufacturers keep inventories to a minimum.

“We often come in as the ‘knight in shining armor to save the day’,” Bortolotti said. “A lot of customers ask ‘Can you take this, now? It’s hot and has to deliver direct, or we’re going to shut down the line.’ If we can legally and logistically handle the load, off we go.

Our confidence comes from the understanding that our equipment is new enough, our driver is experienced enough, and FAST-approved (so he won’t get hung up at the border). Additionally, our dispatch is very knowledgeable in terms of efficiently clearing the shipment at Customs. When show up on time with their load, they often call back to voice their appreciation and support.

“We’re high-visibility. It’s almost like a parting of the sea when our guys come in to some of these huge factories, because the receivers know they need the parts now and don’t want us to get caught standing in line to unload. Everybody takes a lot of pride in the fact that when they call us and we commit, we get it done.”

Thompson is currently seeking experienced owner-operators of; Sprinter Vans, Straight Trucks and Tractors, who meet the company’s qualifications. For each of these vehicle types, they are offering a lucrative ‘Sign-On Bonus’. Additionally, they pay for; tolls, permits, plates, insurance and offer a comprehensive benefit plan.

If an experienced Ontario based Owner Operator, with a valid FAST card and clean abstracts is looking to join a time-tested, winning team, they should call; Mark Bortolotti at (800) 265-7332 #249.

<http://www.expeditersonline.ca/index.php/industry-news/3169-thompson-emergency-freight-systems-high-standards-superior-performance-time-tested.html>