

A Day in the Life...

switching loads in the Canadian Rockies



Above: Ian Tuckey organizes his trip; Left: At the switch point; Right: Good man, Ian!

Almost since inception, Western Logistics has operated in the so-called "Rocky Mountains," which are really a series of mountain ranges. Now, with four terminals in BC and Alberta, we connect Edmonton, Calgary, Kelowna, and Vancouver, as part of our trans-Canada system. In recent years, we have

strived to do this in the form of inter-terminal switches, in which drivers from both ends meet at a mid-point, switch trailers, and return to their base. Everybody wins.

We thought our customers might like to see what a typical switch run looks like. This one was operated by Ian Tuckey, a Calgary-based driver, executing a switch with a Kelowna-based driver. The drivers usually meet between Rogers Pass and Kicking Horse Pass on the Trans-Canada Highway to exchange trailers before returning to base. Typical February mountain weather is evident in the photos. Trucks and trailers need washing after almost every trip.

"The ever-changing weather and road conditions keep the job challenging. No two trips are the same," said Ian Tuckey. "The switch runs have taken on a rhythm that really works for both the customers and the drivers," added Denis Lamarche, Terminal Manager, Calgary. "We run switches both West





Captions from top to bottom: Entering an avalanche tunnel; While mountain roads are challenging for the drivers, and demand high skill levels, the run from Calgary to Kelowna must be one of the most beautiful on earth; Who said this work's easy? Note chain hangers. Trucks must have chains to enter mountainous areas



and East of Calgary, which allows us to deal flexibly with changes of volume. That's important now that the economy has slowed down a bit, especially in Alberta. I think most drivers like the shorter runs that switches allow. It saves a lot of fuel, too, because idling time is almost zero because drivers don't have to sleep."

Western Logistics runs switch operations across Canada, from Victoria, BC, to St. John's, NL, 4500 miles in all. "We operate late model Kenworths with Cummins 475 ISX 'clean diesel' engines," said Bob Hartin, founder of Western Logistics. "Most of them have compact sleeper cabs, so they can operate switches or extended runs, yet still function efficiently in city traffic conditions. In some locations, we are able to use them day and night -- daytime in the city, and night-time on the highway doing a switch. For our long runs, we prefer intermodal service; on medium hauls, we operate on the road, and use switch methodology whenever we can. This is to both reduce carbon footprint and recruit better drivers, who like to get home."



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