

Supermarket specials

EziLiners really deliver

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Foodstuffs Auckland distribution arm Route & Retail Distribution (R&R) has taken a novel approach to increasing the productivity of its trucking fleet. It has recently taken delivery of a Scania 8x2*6 rigid with very different curtainsider systems for its metro fleet.



Curtainsiders with a difference have been fitted on two Scania P320LB 8x2*6 trucks that have recently gone to work in Auckland for Route & Retail Distribution (R&R). The company specified the trucks with the CP14 cab, a DC9-320hp Euro5 engine and a GRS895 Opticruise fully automated transmission. The twin steer, single drive, rear steer is a standard factory option.

"With the rear steer configuration and maximum rear overhang we can utilise the full 12.6m overall length allowed for a rigid truck, which allows us to maximise the deck space to increase productivity," R&R operations project manager Graham Ellis explains. "Compared to our 14 or 16 deck space trucks, we can now get more stores serviced per trip with less trucks and drivers, which has got to be better for the environment, as well as reducing congestion on the roads and at the stores."

R&R specified the Freightler EziLiner "no buckles" curtain system, which replaces fiddly ratchet buckles and straps with a semi-automatic system for vertically tensioning the curtains.

A high-tensile cable running through a series of arcs in the bottom of the curtain create the vertical tension via air-operated rams. The operator releases the curtain tension just the same way as he or she does now; then simply turns a lever, unhooks the rope and slides the curtain back as per normal. To close, the operator just slides the curtain shut and tensions as per a normal curtainsider – hooking the end of the rope on and operating the lever to tension. The whole operation is simple and fast.

The system was fabricated to Takanini truck body and trailer builder MaxiTRANS' specifications by Structurflex. Imaging was done by A2Z Imaging.

The EziLiner system is working perfectly, says Andrew Millar, general manager of MaxiTRANS.

"These are the first EziLiners we have built in New Zealand and we needed to adapt a few things to suit our local rules and regulations," he explains. "Normally there would be only three or four rams each side needed to grab the rope; however we needed to add extra rams to achieve the curtain rating required."

The curtains now have a certified load rating and provide a smooth appearance, offering great advertising opportunities.

Custom-built wind deflector

To address the difference in height between the very short Scania cab and the maximum height front wall of the EziLiner body, R&R consulted Airplex and asked if it

could custom-build a new wind deflector.

Simon Judd from Airplex says "it's always quite difficult to get the roof kit to look right when the angle is so steep. We wanted to enhance the airflow yet keep the factory look of the kit, and I think we came up with a pretty good result in the end."

In fact Ellis was so pleased with the result he ordered the modified deflectors for several of the other Scania's in the R&R fleet.

Tag axle

The Scania's tag axle is hydraulically steered and can be lifted off the ground at the touch of a button. Differing somewhat from passively steered trailer axles, the tag axle actively steers both forwards and in reverse.

Ellis explains that when driving such a long truck you naturally allow for the length when turning, making sure your rear inside wheels don't jump the kerbs. With the Scania you turn in much earlier as the rear steer axle guides the back around in a much smoother arc than you expect.

"Initially your brain is telling you to turn

late because of the length, but when you do, you overshoot. Once you start driving it more like a car or a four-wheeler truck it all starts to work. It's hard to believe the truck will go where you point it, but it does – it seems like a much smaller truck to drive than it actually is," he says.

You do need to be careful when taking off from rest though, because if you turn sharply the rear will initially steer away from its start point.

With several weight-intensive features such as an insulated roof, a heavy duty floor, rear container-type doors and the under-slung tail lift, the truck has a tare weight of approximately 12,700kg. The GVM in New Zealand of 25,300kg allows a 12,600kg payload, which equates to over 600kg per pallet space.

Due to the size of the vehicle, R&R fitted a reversing camera to assist the driver, which was supplied by Viewtech and fitted by MaxiTRANS. The heavy duty camera is made of cast aluminium and has a built-in heater to keep moisture out, so no foggy images. There

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MaxiTRANS introduced this very simple concept at the Brisbane Truck Show four years ago. The idea came from the company's marketing department...



The locking system, locked under the truck's deck



Detail of tensioned rope section



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is a seven-inch colour screen mounted on the dash; the image is crystal clear and has coloured rectangular boxes that help the driver judge the distance.

"It is so clear, you can see so much more than you would expect," Tamati Erimana, the Scania's driver, says. "You can even hear what's going on because there is a microphone back there!"

Transcold supplied the Anteo F3RE20/CC retractable 2000kg rated tail lift, which folds and then retracts away, allowing the truck to be dock loaded. It also gives the Scania the ability to deliver to stores that do not have a fork hoist, like some of the smaller 4 Square stores. Several safety features came standard with the tail lift such as LED warning lights, foot-operated controls and safety rails.

Typically the New World, PAK'n SAVE and 4 Square stores are serviced by R&R's fleet of semi-trailers or full truck and trailer units. Often these cannot manoeuvre around full carparks easily during the day, necessitating deliveries through the night. Many supermarkets, however, are in residential areas that have noise restrictions or curfews. The new rigid trucks, with their 20 deck spaces and amazing manoeuvrability, are changing the game. They carry almost as



Jenny Arama has no trouble pulling back the curtain

much as a semi-trailer but only require a class 4 licensed driver.

Performance and handling

Travelling with Tamati (Matai) around the suburbs, into and out of full supermarket carparks and service access ways showed just how capable these big trucks are. It

was amazing how easily he could fit the truck wherever he needed to go – there was no need to park and unhook trailers or get cars moved.

The main issue Matai has is overhanging trees. It seems the local council or roading authorities like to use passing trucks to prune the roadside trees.



The lever in front of body that activates the Freightor EziLiner curtainsider system

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- Amazing productivity on a class 4 licence
- Effortless truck to drive
- No curtain buckles
- Euro5 emissions rating without the need for additives

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- Steering feels a bit light at cruising speeds
- Too high for residential areas; overhanging trees an issue
- Freighter roof support poles easily prone to damage
- No cup holders

Not needing to unbuckle or buckle up curtains speeds up the loading and unloading times considerably. With traffic levels in Auckland making trips across town take longer, saving time at each stop and carrying more freight on each trip has got to pay dividends.

"I used to drive one of our Hino four-wheelers and we would only get a few drops on the back. With this truck we can get so much more done each trip, it's awesome," Matai says.

When I took the wheel, the first thing I noticed is how effortless and easy to operate everything is. The dash and controls layout will be very familiar to Scania linehaul drivers, as they are exactly the same; probably one of the best and most ergonomically well set-up driver environments available.

One of the display options is the Scania Driver Support system, an extraordinary

feature that helps to teach the driver to operate the truck at its most efficient level. It rewards a driver for efficient performances with a star rating that is saved in the memory, which is useful for challenging yourself to better your results or measuring yourself against your peers.

There are so many clever functions and features that are aimed at efficiency in the Scania I do not have the space to explain them all.

Engine and power

The five-cylinder, 9.3-litre Scania engine produces 235kW (320hp), and with the engine barely ticking over at 1300rpm cruising at 85km/h, it doesn't have to dip too far to find itself at the maximum torque of 1600Nm (1180ft-lbs), which is found between 1100 and 1200rpm.

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A curtainsider support pole

transmission intuitively finds the right gears to suit the weight and road conditions, just as you would if it were a manual – it's as if it can see the road. The transmission has

several functions and features designed to assist the driver to operate the vehicle safely and efficiently.

The engine achieves the Euro5 emissions rating without the need for any additives, using only cooled EGR and clever electronics.

"You really notice the torque; the truck just settles in and holds a steady speed on climbs. Coming up the hill out of Browns Bay the truck held in 10th gear and cruised up the hill effortlessly. It was an uncanny experience in a metro truck, it just dawdles along using very few revs," Ellis says.

I was certainly impressed. R&R's Scania 8x2*6 rigid is easy to operate and effortless to drive.

The vehicle's amazing manoeuvrability means it can fit into more delivery spaces and the EziLiner "no buckles" curtain system speeds up loading and unloading times considerably. One of its most impressive features, however, is that it can carry almost as much as a semi-trailer but only requires a class 4 licensed driver.

The competency and versatility of these

DoW *says...*

This system was developed to make life easier for drivers and to enable far quicker turnaround times. Easing the burden on the drivers gives owners R&R payback in many ways. And to think it all came out of marketing minds...

trucks is outstanding. They can be bulk shuttle trucks and metro delivery trucks all in one package. To say the Scania EziLiner makes effortless work of the day is an understatement. ■

Disclosure: Craig Silby is the owner of *easytrucks*, which R&R consulted for ways to increase its fleet productivity and optimise fleet purchasing. Silby worked with Graham Ellis of R&R to select the Scania P320LB 8x2*6, as well as proposing the Freightier EziLiner "no buckles" curtain system and the Airplex custom-built wind deflector.