

Big Rigs

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influx of behemoths that weigh 80,000 lbs and are 65 feet long? Offset Paperback, Native Textiles and Payne Printery all depend upon heavy trucks to bring in raw materials and move out many loads of finished product. In addition to using their own trucks, each company uses common carriers for both inbound and outbound loads.

As many as 8,000 trucks daily are expected

And the Back Mountain is home to two trucking companies, Calex in Lake Silkworth and Shelley's in Lehman. According to vice president Charlie Reese, all 25 of Shelley's trucks use Route 309 exclusively. Most of Shelley's fleet uses 102" wide trailers, which are only permitted to travel Route 118 to their terminal, Reese said. Routes 415 and 309 are open to these wider trailers, according to the Pennsylvania State Police. Trucks weighing more than 80,000 lbs. or measuring more than 65 feet in length require special permits to travel any highway in Pennsylvania.

Many of the 300 trucks belonging to Tunkhannock's five common carriers routinely use Route 309 or have begun to travel it more frequently in order to save time en route to points south, according to spokesmen for these companies. A large percentage of their freight comes from the Proctor & Gamble plant at Mehoopany.

Safe driving tips

With the increase in heavy truck traffic, the driving public should be aware that these vehicles don't maneuver as easily as a passenger vehicle, according to Charlie Reese. Shelley's drivers have encountered potentially dangerous situations involving cars and tractor-trailers, he said.

"Our truckers have noticed that some Back Mountain drivers don't use the center turning lane. Instead, they sometimes try to make left turns from the driving lanes, often cutting directly in front of a rig. People don't seem to realize that a loaded rig needs roughly the length of a football field to stop; it just can't stop on a dime."

He added, "Many drivers also don't realize that tractor-trailers need lots of room to make wide turns. They have a large turning radius. Truckers must constantly be on the lookout for the little cars zipping around them while they are attempting to turn."

Truckers driving tankers or pulling loads of swinging beef (sides of beef hung from the trailer's ceiling) face extra hazards, as these loads shift much more easily than

others. A load that shifts easily is more likely to tip over than a stable load.

Another complaint concerns confusing posted speed limits in the northbound lane while traveling from Luzerne to Dallas. In the space of less than 2-1/2 miles, between the Luzerne ramp and Burger King in Shavertown, the speed limit changes from 55 to 45 to 35 between the ramp and DAMA, then back to 45 at Carverton Road and 35 at Burger King. These speed changes can easily confuse drivers unfamiliar with the area, Reese said.

And a well-meant but poorly placed sign is also confusing, Shelley's drivers complain. Less than 100 feet north of the "Expressway ends 500 feet" sign across from Wasserrot's, a sign partially obscured by brush warns, "Left turns and cross traffic" in neat, fine letters. If drivers notice it at all, they will probably have forgotten about it by the time that they reach the end of the high concrete barrier at Hillside Road, a mile up the road. This is one of several places where car drivers are tempted to stop or slow down suddenly to read the sign, Reese says.

Unless they have been warned by other drivers on the CB, truckers unfamiliar with the area may also be unaware that road conditions can change suddenly in the Back Mountain, Reese noted. Given certain weather conditions, it can be raining in Luzerne, sleeting at the "rock cuts" and snowing at the overpass at Overbrook Road. Past Shadyside, the weather gets progressively worse all the way to Tunkhannock. Or black ice, a thin, icy coating indistinguishable from water, can suddenly form on the roadway, causing sudden skidding and jackknife accidents.

Jeff Box is also concerned about the impact of a substantial traffic increase on Kingston Township, at the narrow end of what he calls "the funnel."

"PennDOT has indicated to me that the Route 309 corridor is the third busiest in the entire northeast district," he said. "I've often sat in my office and heard the screech of tractor-trailer brakes as rigs tried to stop on the uphill grade at Carverton Road. And although our police have been aggressively enforcing the speed limits for the past 2-1/2 years, cars still fly by."

Concern raised about hazardous substances

Box is also concerned about the transportation of hazardous materials through the Back Mountain and their potential dangers.

Current hazardous materials regulations allow hazardous loads to go anywhere in the state, unless

Long distance lingo

What are those truckers saying?

If you've ever heard truckers talking on the CB, you've probably wondered what in the world they're saying. Here's a translation of some of the most common trucker buzz words.

- Smokey or bear:** a state trooper
- Bear in the air:** a state trooper in a helicopter
- Bear with a hair dryer:** a state trooper with a radar gun
- Bird dog:** a radar detector (illegal in some states)
- Draggin' wagon:** towtruck
- Salt shaker:** snowplow or cinder truck
- Reefer:** refrigerated trailer
- Portable parking lot:** a rig hauling new cars
- Plain blue (or any other color) wrapper:** unmarked police car
- Four-wheeler:** passenger car
- Stagecoach:** bus
- Hot load:** a load that is overweight, improperly documented, oversize, doesn't carry the proper permits or is illegal in some other way.
- Chicken coop:** weigh station and safety checkpoint that spots hot loads and other violations.
- Red-tagged:** a rig declared out of service and unfit for the road (usually happens at chicken coops).
- Maggot wagon:** a trailer carrying garbage.
- Good buddy:** never say this to a trucker!
- 10-33:** accident.
- 10-36:** "What time is it?" (never confuse with 10-33!)
- Thermos bottle:** milk tanker
- Meat wagon:** ambulance
- You have a clean shot:** no bears in the air, in plain blue wrappers or with hair dryers, along the road.
- So...keep the shiny side up, the dirty side down, the bugs off the glass and the bears off your bumper, driver!**

local regulations or ordinances restrict them. Trailers containing hazardous loads must carry warning placards describing the contents (flammable liquids, explosives, etc.)

But under the "1,000 lb. law," any rig carrying less than 1,000 lb. of hazardous materials is not required to carry a warning placard. Unless this material is clearly marked on the manifest and the driver is aware of what the stuff is (which is not always the case, says a former Back Mountain owner-operator), an accident can quickly become a catastrophe.

Box concluded, "Due to our geographic position, I am concerned that Kingston Township will be asked to assume an unfair burden in controlling the traffic on Route 309. Highway traffic control could create the need for more manpower."

"Our township supervisors are clearly concerned about public safety. The burden of patrolling the highway has apparently shifted to the local police departments. But how much of the burden for a highway that serves several municipalities should be assumed by the residents of one municipality? Our police can't sacrifice evening neighborhood patrols for traffic patrol on the highway. Neighbor-

hood safety is our first priority."

Box noted that the formation of the Transportation Management Association, an organization composed of area police, municipal officials, Emergency Management personnel and representatives from PennDOT, is a good step towards addressing the Back Mountain's traffic problems. Although the trouble spots have been identified, the area needs some type of cooperation or change in the way that they are handled, he said. "Basically, many of the Back Mountain's traffic problems are growing pains caused by our development during the 1980's."

The bottom line for Back Mountain drivers faced with sharing our roads with more traffic and heavy trucks is to give the trucks as much room as possible. The truckers really don't want to run you off the road. They're just trying to do their jobs—in a confusing, frustrating and sometimes dangerous environment. Sometimes motorists make their jobs harder, more dangerous and more frustrating.

An popular old truckers' song says, "Give me 40 acres and I'll turn this rig around." Remember that it isn't as much of an exaggeration as it sounds. Give the big trucks room and Route 309 will be safer for everyone.

Help

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things even more complicated, sometimes a street will cross into two towns, and houses in two different locations will have the same number.

What can a resident do to make it easier to find their home in an emergency?

Tell the dispatcher the town you live in, the street, the box number, and any nearby landmarks.

"It's important at night especially. If they don't have a number, a lot of times we'll pass the place right up," said Dallas Mayor Paul LaBar, who is also a member of the Dallas Ambulance company.

And what can you do to make the house easier to find when the emergency crew gets near?

Use numbers instead of script on your home, says LaBar; it's easier to read.

Make sure that the number is visible from all directions help may be coming from, says Wayman Miers.

'911' lights can help

And '911' lights can help, especially where there is a group of houses, or at trailer parks. In a crowded trailer park where the homes may not be numbered sequentially, the 911 light, which is designed to blink, can lead help right to you without them having to scour the neighborhood first.

Back Mountain fire and ambulance companies have been selling the lights since the beginning of winter. To learn how to purchase one, contact your local fire or ambulance company.

"Box numbers hurt us, especially in groups," said Miers. "People will say, 'Oh, I'll leave my porch lights on, or my Christmas lights on.' Do you know how many people have Christmas lights on? They're not making our job easier for a quicker response time if we

have to hunt them down."

Miers feels that the Colorado system, which assigns a box number for a given interval of feet, whether or not there is a home there yet, is the best system. The numbers correspond with miles, so that the number 2,000 would be two miles from the intersection where the numbering began, which gives emergency workers an idea of when to begin looking, said Miers.

According to Evans, Jackson Township converted about 90 percent of its homes to the Colorado system about five years ago.

Dallas Postmaster Ray Ciccone said that the Dallas Post Office has converted about 20 percent of rural addresses from rural routes to street and house number addresses, primarily in locations such as New Goss Manor, College Manor, Shrine Acres and Haddonfield Hills.

And while the change may have helped emergency crews, Ciccone said that it wasn't popular with residents.

"A street with 20 families, I'd get five complaints," said Ciccone. "People are so used to doing things one way they are very adverse to change. We tried to change the addresses in one section of Dallas.

People drafted a petition and brought it down, there were so many opposed."

While some firefighters, ambulance workers, and police officers are hoping for the day when all addresses are by street and house number, Ciccone stresses that nobody's address is being changed by the current project.

"Every second counts, the time you spend looking for somebody, that's time lost," said Evans. "It's so cheap to put up the numbers, a \$1 in paint, but I know firefighters who don't have them up."

Rep. Hasay returns unspent expense money to the state

Rep. George C. Hasay said recently that as the state continues to struggle with a fiscal crisis, he was pleased to return more than \$7,300 to the state treasury in unspent expense money.

Legislative expense account records reveal that Hasay returned \$7,358.64 to the state this year.

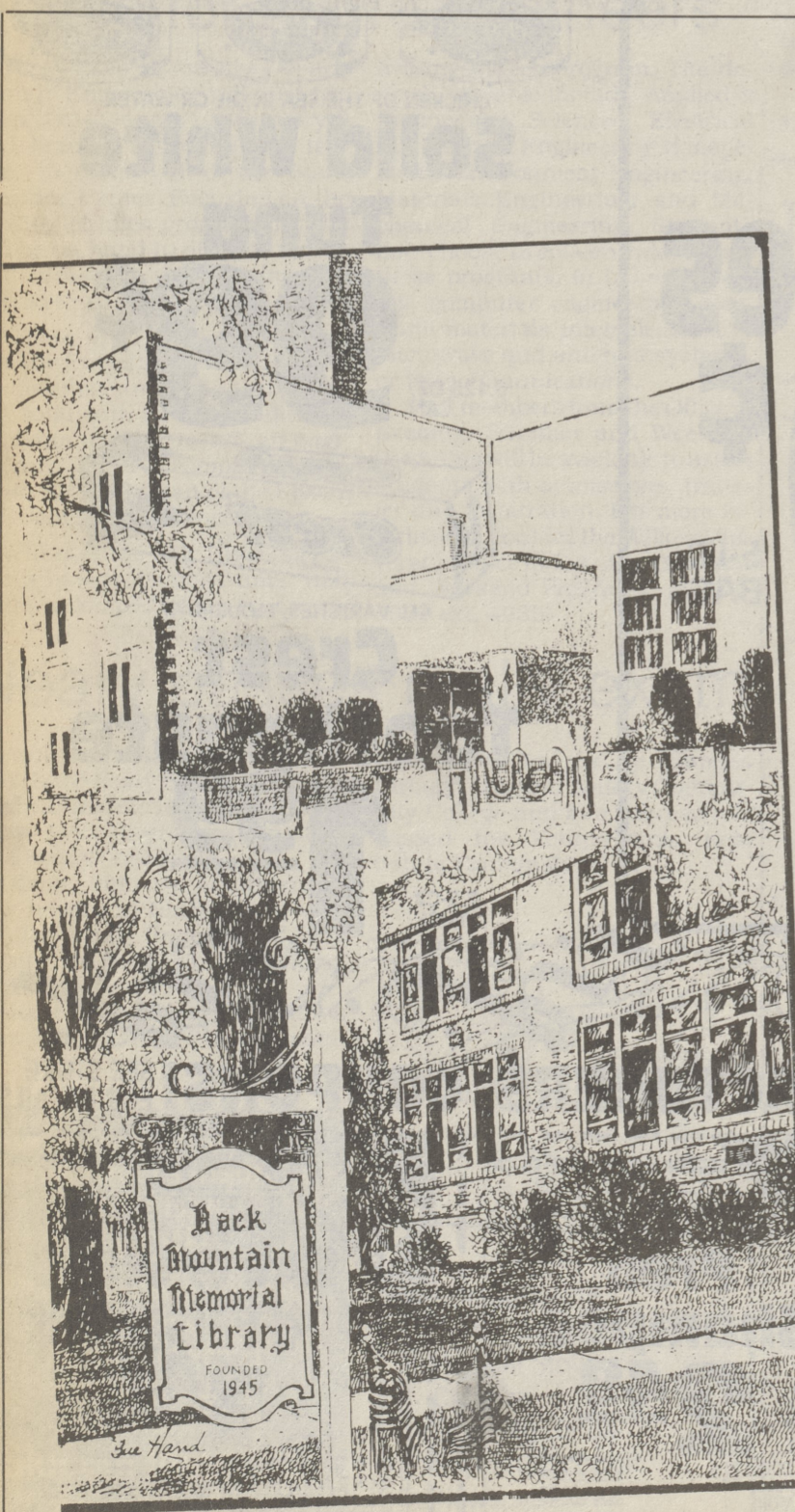
"This money is allocated to legislators each year for the operation of the district office, mailing costs and general expenses," Hasay said. "By closely monitoring the cost of operating my district office while effectively meeting constituent needs, I was able to return this money to the state without sacrificing any services to the residents of the 117th District."

As Republican chairman of the

House Conservation Committee, Hasay receives an annual committee account of \$4,000. He also returned \$3,000 annually from each of the previous two years.

He noted that such fiscal belt-tightening is necessary with the Casey Administration predicting a potential budget deficit of \$50 million this year in spite of record tax increases.

"There is still a great deal of concern about the economy in Pennsylvania," Hasay said. "All state departments and agencies must work, continue to work to reduce costs and expenditures in order to keep the deficit at an absolute minimum. I know that I will continue to do my part as a state legislator."



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Note: Because of the size of the cookbook, we must charge \$3.50 for postage and handling if it is to be mailed.

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