

# NORTHWEST TANK LINES INC.

By Harvey Chartrand

NORTHWEST TANK LINES Inc., based in Langley, B.C., with offices in Calgary and Woodstock, ON., services customers in the chemical industry in a number of ways. The carrier provides specialized transportation services and equipment for the North American chemical and petrochemical industry; brings extensive product knowledge and experience with industrial chemicals, liquefied propane gas and natural gas liquids; services its customer base from multi-regional terminals across Canada, with 48-state Department of Transportation safety approval; manages rail/truck transfer facilities; and maintains numerous partnerships with chemical producers and their distributors.

Northwest decided to become a member of the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association (CCPA), as the carrier was already providing transportation services to many CCPA member-companies, adopting a number of their management systems and procedures to be able to serve them better.

"As a member and Responsible Care partner of CCPA, we are looking forward to improving our overall management systems, particularly in health,

safety and the environment," says Northwest's dynamic president, Tom Blaney. "We also welcome the opportunity to work more closely with CCPA member-companies to learn more about what they look for in a long-term carrier relationship. We feel that the time spent learning and sharing best practices with our fellow transportation providers will contribute to our overall strength in the future."

Northwest began in 1955 as a small local Vancouver carrier, and is proudly celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. It has evolved into one of the leading bulk carriers in North America, with annual revenues in excess of \$25 million.

Asked about Northwest's corporate growth strategy for the future, Blaney says: "We plan to double our business in the next five years, concentrating our growth efforts on companies that value our safety and customer service value-added approach to the chemical and petrochemical business – that is, CCPA members. Searching for new people to bring into our organization as we grow will be very important to our continued success. We would also like



to grow our transportation emergency response business by working with TEAP (Transportation Emergency Assistance Plan) as a regional service provider."

Blaney feels that implementing Responsible Care will be a very real challenge to Northwest, but the carrier is up to it. "As a very strong, multi-regional carrier, we run a lean and mean ship. To ensure that this does not impair our ability to totally embrace Responsible Care, we have hired a former chemical industry expert on Responsible Care and TransCAER (TRANSpportation Community Awareness and Emergency Response) to guide us through the codes of prac-

tice, management systems and ultimate verification. Terry Litchfield recently retired from Nexen Chemicals (where he served as transportation and logistics manager) and has joined Northwest's staff as our director of Responsible Care. With Terry's extensive knowledge and enthusiasm, along with my personal commitment to provide adequate financial and people resources, I am confident that we will succeed. We are extremely proud of our safety record and the recognition we have received over the years from the U.S. National Tank Truck Carriers, and know that this comes from having a very dedicated and professional team of drivers who are truly committed to safety and service excellence."

Blaney is quick to point out that Community Outreach has been a major priority to Northwest since the carrier's first terminal was built in North Vancouver in 1955. "Northwest is a founding member of the B.C. Regional TransCAER Committee and we have actively participated in TransCAER exercises and workshops in more than 25 B.C. and Alberta communities over the last 17 years. We also regularly visit our neighbors around our offices and terminals to ensure they know who we are and have no issues with our operations."

Overall, 50 per cent of Northwest's chemical transportation business is transborder, with most of that destined for the U.S. Pacific Northwest. The carrier also transports cross-border on the east coast from its Woodstock and Fort Erie, Ont., terminals.

Despite great efforts by Canadian truckers to abide by U.S. Homeland Security measures, Blaney is concerned about lengthy waiting times for truckers at U.S.-Canada border crossings. "Chemical producers in Canada and the U.S. and their partner carriers should be jointly submitting comments to their governments on safety, security, border issues and hours of service legislation," he says. "We are very proud of Northwest's continuing efforts with the various cross-border security initiatives, such as FAST (Free and Secure Trade Program), BRASS (Border Release Advanced Selectivity Sys-

tem) and the ACE (Automated Commercial Environment) program. However, we would also like to see some results from our cooperation – namely, shorter waiting times at border crossings." 🍷

*Harvey Chartrand is a busy freelance writer based in Ottawa. His stories have appeared in The Globe & Mail, The National Post, The Jerusalem Post, The Ottawa Citizen, Filmfax, Rue Morgue and Outré. Mr. Chartrand is also the editor of Ottawa Life Magazine.*