Down to the last drop

When it’s time to turn the key off, the benefits of APUs go beyond maximized fuel economy, improving driver health and the financial bottom line.

Owner-operators carry a heavy load behind the wheel and also as the sole force driving their business operations. In today’s highly competitive industry, owner-operators need to explore every option to improve profitability and to ensure a healthy business. While auxiliary power units have been around for many years, they are one of the biggest challenges facing truckers today.

Investing in you and your business
Owner-operators and small fleets alike understand firsthand that trucking is not a profession for the faint of heart. According to a study published in the February 2017 Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, drivers with three or more medical conditions had a significantly increased risk of preventable Department of Transportation-reportable crashes and preventable crashes with injuries.

However, with long days on the road and the majority of that time sitting, maintaining a healthy lifestyle can be one of the biggest challenges facing truckers today.

An investment in an APU can deliver significant benefits that can have a lasting effect on driver health. For example, with the necessary power on board, drivers can refrigerate prepared foods, and have the ability to reheat healthy options or cook healthier meals rather than surviving on fast food or truckstop choices. Studies also show that better nutrition and healthier eating habits may protect against health-related problems linked to obesity and an inactive lifestyle. For owner-operators, maintaining good health is important for keeping them on the road for the long haul.

In addition to healthier eating, drivers with an APU enjoy the benefits of climate control to promote quality sleep. If a driver’s cab is too warm or too cold, it can disrupt quality sleep and lead to an unhealthy pattern of drowsy driving. For owner-operators considering an APU, it’s time to think beyond fuel savings and consider how an investment in their health can improve the return on investment of an APU.

Less idle time, more savings
With growing regulations and the proliferation of anti-idling laws, it is challenging for owner-operators to compete with larger fleets. To maximize and maintain the output required to be profitable, owner-operators need to consider how an APU can improve their well-being and their business beyond the known fuel savings.

It’s reported that owner-operators spend about 50 percent of their time on the road idling. Half of this time is when they are stopped with their engines running. Today’s APU technology is designed to help owner-operators and fleets not only abide by the anti-idling laws, but also reduce their costs, thus increasing the...
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For example, idling burns fuel and can also be hard on tractor engines. In addition, tractors newer than 2010 have diesel particulate filters, so high-idling is harsh on the emission system, and more maintenance and higher costs in the future. With APUs, drivers can keep their engine hours low so they can drive their tractors longer.

This year, Thermo King conducted testing on trucks that have TriPac Evolution APUs on the tractor. Drivers reported that idling decreased from 36.8 percent to 4.18 percent. Additionally, the tractor fuel mileage increased from 6.8 to 7.44 mpg.

Staying on the road and connected to home

It’s undeniable that uptime is critical for owner-operators and small fleets alike. When truckers are hauling freight, they’re making money, but the time away from home often comes at a cost. With an APU, truckers find that their ability to stay connected to loved ones at home is priceless. From powering accessories such as laptops and cell phones that keep communications open to having the ability for gaming or watching TV, APUs give drivers the option for much needed connection and downtime in their home away from home. APUs can help combat the feeling of isolation that often accompanies long stretches on the road. For drivers’ mental health, the ability to remain connected to friends and family while having power for entertainment to unwind is important for maintaining a healthy life and healthy business long-term.

Questions to consider

With several APU options available, it’s important for owner-operators to consider the following before investing in an APU:

- Does the manufacturer have a nationwide service network that can assist you no matter where you are on the road?
- Will the APU help with your overall efficiency and reliability? Can the manufacturer show you the potential return on investment?
- How loud is the APU? Will you be able to sleep comfortably?
- Is the APU easy to use and maintain?

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- Is the APU durable to withstand harsh road and weather conditions?
- Will the APU add residual value if you choose to trade the tractor in down the road?

For owner-operators who want to better understand the financial benefits of purchasing and operating an APU specific to their business, Thermo King offers a return-on-investment calculator that takes into consideration operating days, idle hours, fuel prices and much more to help owner-operators determine return on investment and payback time.

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