

300,000th truck marks milestone for Peterbilt

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By Candace Carlisle / Staff Writer

Amid the noise of production machinery, Peterbilt Motor Co. handed over the keys to its 300,000th truck to a customer, Witte Brothers Exchange, on Wednesday afternoon.



DRC/Gary Payne

Peterbilt General Manager Bill Jackson, center, hands the keys to the company's 300,000th truck, a Peterbilt Model 387, to Brent Witte, left, as his wife, Elaine Witte, and father, Harry Witte, watch Wednesday in Denton. The truck was bought by trucking company Witte Brothers Exchange of Troy, Mo.

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The aerodynamic, slate gray Model 387 truck symbolizes the long line of trucks that have rolled down the assembly line since 1980 and is an important milestone for the company, said Bill Jackson, Peterbilt general manager and PACCAR vice president.

"The 300,000th truck produced, a Peterbilt Model 387, signifies the attributes of Peterbilt past, present and future through its fuel-efficient design, while not compromising the class and style that have become synonymous with the Peterbilt brand," Jackson said.

Brent Witte, president of Witte Brothers Exchange, was all smiles when he accepted the keys and sat in the driver's seat of his newly acquired truck Wednesday.

This truck will be put into service immediately for the 50-year-old frozen and refrigerated food carrier based in Missouri and is expected to be in use for about five years, Witte said.

"[Peterbilt] fulfills our unique needs," he said. "It's a premium truck for our operations and a good value for our money."

The quality and support, as well as the ease of handling the truck's ease of handling in tight places, also helped contribute to Witte Brothers' decision to move from a 40 percent Peterbilt fleet to a 100 percent Peterbilt fleet by December 2009, he said.

When a truck needs maintenance in the middle of the night, it's important to know a company will be there, anywhere in the country -- something not always found with other dealerships or manufacturers, Witte said.

Quality was one reason why Denton City Council member Jack Thomson said he was proud to be at the production facility for the ceremonial key-handoff.

"I hate to see anything but a Peterbilt truck in Denton," Thomson said. "They are the Cadillac of trucks and we are glad they are in Denton."

Thomson said the facility has come a long way over the years by adding automation to the assembly line, while producing top quality trucks.

Automation has helped the company become more productive, pumping out 73 trucks a day, said Jim Fykes, Peterbilt plant manager.

"The pace has quickened quite a bit," he said.

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