

Gary company unveils new semitrailer

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MERRILLVILLE | Freightliner Trucks boasts that its new Cascadia semitrailer has a revolutionary design that is more efficient, more comfortable, and easier to drive than any truck on the market today.

If the DaimlerChrysler subsidiary's claim is accurate, Truck City of Gary might soon receive a financial windfall.

The Gary seller of new and used tractor-trailers will begin delivering Cascadias in September. The company unveiled the semitrailer Tuesday at a ceremony at the Radisson Hotel.

The Cascadia's attributes include being perhaps the first semitrailer with rack and pinion steering and a lighter weight that allows it to handle better and carry more products.

"This is much more aerodynamic and fuel-efficient," Truck City general manager/owner Gerri Davis said. "It drives much like a car."

Truck City, located at 7360 W. Chicago Ave., Gary, is building a 55,000-square-foot facility at 25th Avenue and Taft Street in Gary. Its reputation helped it become the third dealership to unveil the Cascadia, which was completed in May, said Davis. The first two are in Indianapolis and Salt Lake City.

"(The unveiling decision) speaks to their faith in us," she said.

The Cascadia will come in two models -- a sleeper and a day cab. Sleepers will cost between \$105,000 and \$115,000, while the day cabs will be priced at between \$90,000 and \$100,00, said Ron Coffman, Truck City's general sales manager.

On Tuesday, several Truck City salesmen explained to about 120 people, primarily executives interested in buying semitrailers, how the Cascadia is more comfortable and fuel-efficient than other tractor-trailers.

The cabs are about 20 percent bigger than the average semitrailer with a larger door opening, larger seats, and more room between seats.

"This truck will have a huge impact on the market," said Coffman.

Davis and Coffman said the semitrailer's enhanced comfort level is important because it will reduce driver fatigue and help haulers plagued by high turnover rates retain their drivers. Davis said she expects to sell a "couple of hundred" Cascadias per year.

At the presentation, Truck City handed out materials from Freightliner. The company said its new tractor-trailer is "designed to feature the best aerodynamics in the industry and deliver unmatched fuel economy." This translates into more profits for haulers.

In Heavy Duty Trucking's July issue, which was handed out to prospective semitrailer buyers, writer Jim Park praised the Cascadia's reduced noise levels, fuel savings and emphasis on responding to customer demands rather than appearance.

"Cascadia is a truck that drivers will take to," Park wrote. "It's big and roomy, it's quiet and handles like a charm."