

Gary's Truck City first in state to sell state-of-art semitrailer

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By Michelle L. Quinn Post-Tribune correspondent

As foundation work started on its new facility along Interstate 94 on Tuesday, Truck City unveiled a new improvement that will be rolling into its Gary confines this fall.

The 61-year-old company will start selling the Freightliner Cascadia, a semitrailer being touted for its aerodynamics and fuel efficiency as much as its comfort.

Truck City will be the first retailer in Indiana, and third in the nation, to sell the rig, owners Art and Gerri Davis announced at a luncheon held at the Radisson Hotel in Merrillville.

"This is a big day all around for us," said Ron Coffman, Truck City's general sales manager. "With the new building and these rigs, some good things are happening."

The Cascadia has several features worth noting, said Steve Flammersfeld, district manager for Freightliner LLC of Portland, Ore.

Especially attractive is its fuel emissions system, which will need few, if any, modifications by the time federal emission laws are enacted in 2010 nationwide.

"There's a filter in the truck that captures all the smoke," Flammersfeld said. "By 2010, the trucks will be spitting out cleaner air than what's coming in."

Ease of maintenance is what compelled the Davises to add the Cascadia to its products, Art Davis said. That ease means less downtime for the driver.

"The dash area can be pulled out to change fuses, and the battery moves forward, which reduces resistance," he said.

Most of all, the Cascadia, of which the sleeper cab on display measured 90 inches high and 72 inches wide, is built for comfort, with an automatic transmission and other features.

"You know what a fleet's average turnover rate is per year? One hundred percent. Drivers leave for any reason under the sun and go work for another company," Flammersfeld said. "That's why when you build a rig, you need to offer as many amenities as possible so that your drivers will want to stay in that truck."

Coffman said the Cascadia will cost about \$3,000 more than some of the more popular brands.