Demanding Quality

In 25 years of operating a truck fleet in some of the harshest conditions in the world, Allen Scraba has relied on only one filter brand: Luber-finer

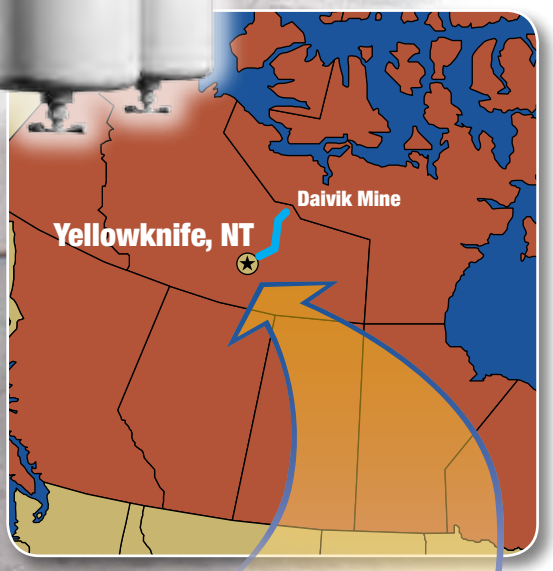
Generally, when you hear someone use words and phrases like "insane," "so far behind" and "it's just not happening" to describe the current state of their profession, you'd expect that they were about to tell you that they were either going to initiate a search for a new line of work or were on the way to visit their therapist.

But that's what makes Allen Scraba so unique. When Scraba uses those descriptions when talking about the work being done by his company, ARS Trucking & Welding of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, he can't keep the joy, excitement and wonderment from entering his voice. Of course, Scraba's job involves doing something that most of us can barely imagine. For 25 years now, ARS has specialized in preparing trucks and heavy-duty vehicles to deliver fuel and supplies for a wide range of industries that operate in one of the world's most unforgiving climates—the treeless, oftentimes sunless, sub-zero tundra in far northern Canada within the Arctic Circle.

For fans of the History Channel program *Ice Road Truckers*, Scraba's name may be familiar. He and ARS gained a bit of notoriety in 2007 when they were featured in an episode where one of the company's drivers rolled his tanker truck (no injuries or product spillage occurred) on the famous "ice road" that helps connect Yellowknife—the capital of Canada's Northwest Territories, and the home of a second ARS facility, which doubles as a staging area for the trucks that travel the treacherous byway—to the Diavik Diamond Mines, located on an island in the middle of Lac de Gras, some 217 miles (350 kilometers) northeast of Yellowknife.

Officially called the Tibbitt to Contwoyto Winter Road, the “ice road” is 373 miles (600 kilometers) long and open approximately three months each winter, with 70 percent of its length spanning a series of frozen lakes. Because of its unique construction, the ice road is heavily regulated—many jokingly call it the “world’s largest school zone”—with the number of trucks allowed on it, and the speeds at which they can travel, strictly controlled in order to protect the ice, meaning that a round trip from Yellowknife to Diavik can take upwards of 36 hours.

It is the state of this season’s deliveries to Diavik that have Scraba all fired up: “We are so far behind,” he said of the 2010-11 ice-road season. “We’ve been going since October for seven days a week, 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., but we’ve got rollovers coming in, we’ve got trailers to get done, and it’s just not happening. At the end of the day, you can only do so much, but it’s been really insane this year.”



250 miles south of the Artic Circle, long haul truckers battle extreme temperatures to deliver fuel and supplies on a 373 miles long raod made almost entirely of ice.

Forging Ahead

Perhaps Scraba is able to keep his perspective because, he says, “I’ve seen everything under the sun since 1977.” In fact, while the work of ARS in relation to the trucks that traverse the ice road has gathered the lion’s share of attention—thanks to the unblinking eye of the television camera—in reality the annual trips to the Diavik Diamond Mines are a bit of a day at the beach for Scraba when compared to some of the other projects that ARS has committed equipment and manpower to in just the past six months. For example:

Hope Bay is a 50-mile (80-kilometer) long stretch of land about 200 miles (322 kilometers) northeast of Diavik in Canada’s Nunavit Territory. It may also be the repository for as many as 9 million ounces of unrecovered gold. Operated by the Newmont Mining Company, the Hope Bay project began to get up to speed last fall with the delivery of 22,000 tons of cargo and nearly 6 million gallons (22 million liters) of diesel fuel, which would be consumed by the 400 employees at the project site. Contributing transport trucks and trailers to this stocking effort was ARS, with the vehicles often in use for 24 hours a day.

The Mary River Project is a proposed iron ore mine to be run by the Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation

that will be located on Baffin Island, well within the Arctic Circle in the Qikiqtani Region of the Nunavut Territory, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) south of Pond Inlet and some 620 miles (1,000 kilometers) northwest of Iqaluit, the capital of the Nunavut Territory. Estimates say the Mary River Project can produce as much as 18 million tons of iron ore per year before it is played out in two decades. Like the Hope Bay project, Scraba contracted to have his trucks—which were shipped to the project site via barge—help in the delivery of supplies and the completion of preliminary setup work at the site.

The challenges associated with projects like these are many. "We do all kinds of stuff that most others wouldn't dream of doing," noted Scraba. "On projects like these we had the trucks going 24 hours a day and workers doing 12-hour shifts for eight straight weeks. At eight weeks for 24 hours a day, that's more than 1,300 hours straight that some of those trucks were running. But we had to do it because where they were you don't shut the truck off. If I shut a truck off in the middle of the tundra where it's 50-below, it won't start back up, and there are no repair shops, so you have to keep the trucks warm."

A Constant Companion

To keep the projects only he would "dream of" undertaking from turning into nightmares, Scraba needs to identify and rely on equipment that he can trust. That's why for the past quarter of a century he has turned to the Luber-finer brand from Champion Laboratories, Inc., Albion, IL, USA, for all of the filtration needs for his vehicles. From oil/lube and fuel filters to air, cabin air and hydraulic filters, if it doesn't say Luber-finer on the label, it doesn't go on his trucks.

"We've been using them for at least 25 years—and that's all I use," said Scraba. "Luber-finer is just quality and if you don't have quality you don't have anything. At the end of the day, what more do you want? If I have to pay $5 a filter more, I'll pay it for a Luber-finer. After 25 years on the ice, I know what I'm doing, and when you start getting to the 40, 50, 60, 70 belows you have to be able to count on the equipment you use and I've always been able to count on Luber-finer."

"When I have to count on it, I have to count on it, and we've been running Luber-finers for years and years and have had no issues with them,"

– Allen Scraba

In fact, Scraba recently hired a new purchasing manager for his operation, and he had one command: "Luber-finer is what you get."

The reliability and dependability he gets from all of the Luber-finer lines is of the utmost importance to Scraba. In conditions as severe as those in which his vehicles operate, the breakdowns can be just as severe, including cracked or collapsed filters that can lead to blown engines, occurrences that put the driver at extreme risk when you're dealing with temperatures that can easily reach -70°F (-57°C). That's why the only labels you'll see on the shelves at Scraba's shops in Edmonton and Yellowknife say Luber-finer.

"At Yellowknife we have 15 to 17 ARS trucks, about 30 leased trucks and another 100 or so trucks that come in from customers, so that's 140 to 150 trucks we'll service this winter," said Scraba. "We keep stocking the shelves with Luber-finer and we go through them like butter. I've had people come in and try to sell me other brands, but I've never had any problems with Luber-finer, so why change? That's all my customers get is Luber-finer filters because that's what I carry. I tell them, 'If you have your own, bring your own, but otherwise you're getting Luber-finer.'"

Scraba makes a habit of changing out all of a vehicle's filters after 250 hours of operation, but he's so confident in the performance of the Luber-finer

products that he doesn't worry if that threshold is surpassed, often by a wide margin.

"I've had some trucks run 700 hours for a job and even when we changed them after all that time the filters were still good and we could've kept using them, if we wanted," said Scraba.

Luber-finer products have been eliciting this type of response and loyalty almost since the brand's founding 75 years ago in 1936. Focusing initially on oil filters for the heavy-duty truck market, the Luber-finer brand has grown to become one of the world leaders in developing all types of OE grade vehicle-filtration products for use in the heavy-duty and light-automotive markets. In fall 2010, Luber-finer kicked off a new marketing program with the introduction of the Built To Do More™ tagline, which expresses Luber-finer's core value of going the extra mile for its distributors and customers.

Conclusion

Ice roads. Tundra. Climatic conditions more suited for polar bears than humans. Motor oil turning to "drilling mud" before it can be drained from a truck because the thermometer reads -60°F. Allen Scraba has indeed seen it all when he looks back on 25 years of supplying vehicles for use by the hardy industries that call the most remote reaches of northern Canada home. In all that time, though, he has only seen one brand of filtration products placed on his vehicles: Luber-finer.

"When I have to count on it, I have to count on it, and we've been running Luber-finers for years and years and have had no issues with them," said Scraba. "That's why all you'll find in my shops is Luber-finer. It's what I buy and it's what I use. I tell my customers they have two choices: use Luber-finer or go somewhere else."

Luber-finer is a leading global filtration brand from Champion Laboratories, Inc. Based in Albion, IL, USA, Champion Laboratories is a quality and technology leader and one of the world's largest manufacturers of filters and filtration products and related services. Luber-finer has been a trusted name in air filters, cabin air filters, coolant filters, fuel filters, hydraulic filters and lube filters since 1936, providing high-efficiency performance in the most demanding work environments.

For more information, visit **www.luberfiner.com** or call our Tech Hotline at **(800) 882-0890**.

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