



S.5 Fleet Maintenance Management Study Group Information Report: 2007-1

Developing a State Maintenance Council: Challenges and Opportunities

Developed by the Technology & Maintenance Council's (TMC)
S.5 Fleet Maintenance Management Study Group

ABSTRACT

State maintenance councils can offer a reasonable, local alternative for fleet personnel wishing to network with peers and gain exposure to industry information. However, many areas of North America do not have a state, regional or local maintenance council. The purpose of this information report is to review the benefits joining or developing a state, regional or local maintenance council.

TMC's S.5 Fleet Maintenance Management Study Group has investigated the possibility of developing affiliations between TMC and existing state maintenance councils. As a result, S.5 created a task force to research:

- what state maintenance councils exist,
- how they were developed,
- what role they play within their respective state trucking associations,
- the need for developing regional maintenance councils, and;
- how state maintenance councils could benefit by becoming members of TMC.

The Task Force, therefore, recommends that TMC develop a simple registration process as outlined above and publish annually a list of state maintenance councils. It is also recommended that the president of the state trucking association sign off, certifying that their state has an active maintenance council.

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INTRODUCTION

Many fleet maintenance executives and managers recognize the value of solving problems and improving operations by networking with their industry peers. The Technology & Maintenance Council (TMC) of American Trucking Associations, Inc. is an excellent international resource for this purpose. However, not all fleet personnel have the means to travel to national or international meetings on a regular basis.

State maintenance councils can offer a reasonable, local alternative for fleet personnel wishing to network with peers and gain exposure to industry information. However, many areas of North America do not have a state, regional or local maintenance council. The purpose of this information report is to review the benefits of joining or developing a state, regional or local maintenance council.

BACKGROUND

TMC's S.5 Fleet Maintenance Management Study Group has investigated the possibility of developing affiliations between TMC and existing state maintenance councils. As a result, S.5 created a task force to research:

- what state maintenance councils exist,
- how they were developed,
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- how state maintenance councils could benefit by becoming members of TMC.

FINDINGS

A. Existing State Maintenance Councils

Fleet Maintenance Magazine publishes a list of state maintenance councils on its website www.fleetmag.com. TMC itself also publishes such a list in its annual *Industry Reference Guide*. These lists show that only 27 of 50 states actually have an active maintenance

council. (A list of these states appears at the end of this report.) Five other states—Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah—have banded together to form a regional council entitled the Rocky Mountain Fleet Management Association.

The remaining states apparently do not have an active maintenance council.

S.5's Task Force made some attempts to verify these published lists but it is important to note that the group did not verify 100 percent of those listed. In the end, the Task Force concluded that there is not a valid list of state maintenance councils that can be relied upon with 100 percent certainty. Therefore, TMC recommends that a program be established whereby each state maintenance council may register with TMC so a comprehensive list might be maintained.

B. How Existing Councils Were Developed

The Task Force gathered information and entertained presentations from key states that have developed successful state maintenance councils, such as Arkansas and Ohio. Representatives from both states reported that their success is attributable to two key elements:

- Support from their respective State Trucking Association in the form of administrative and organizational duties.
- Strong volunteer support by key fleet maintenance personnel.

C. The Role State Maintenance Councils Play Within State Trucking Associations

Successful state maintenance councils reported that their organizations became a valuable resource for their respective state trucking associations by offering shared knowledge and networking opportunities to association members.

Much like many state safety councils, the maintenance councils play the role of an expert resource that allows fleets of all sizes to

benefit from the state association. TMC's National Technician Skills Competition—TMC SuperTech—is also spurring the development of state competitions based on the same model. State Trucking Associations are leveraging their state maintenance councils to manage the local competition which feeds state winners into TMC's national competition.

D. Developing Regional Councils

Many fleets are domiciled in a state that has no maintenance council. For these, joining an established council in a neighboring state has become a viable alternative.

The Task Force offers as evidence the example given by a Missouri-based carrier that reportedly found its time better spent joining the Arkansas Maintenance Council, since the organization is strong, adequately staffed and its meetings well attended.

While required to join the Arkansas State Trucking Association and pay a small fee to join that state's maintenance council, the carrier reportedly found it was a more cost effective option than spending time attempting to start another council and invest countless hours with the risk of failure.

As mentioned previously, several states have joined resources to support a regional maintenance council. A primary advantage of this approach was supplier representatives may attend one regional council meeting as opposed to several state council meetings and functions within the same month.

E. State Maintenance Council Affiliation With TMC

The Task Force briefly explored the concept of formal affiliation between state maintenance councils and TMC. There was reportedly some concern that TMC may require each State Maintenance Council to pay some sort of fee to become a "registered" member with little or

no benefit derived from a "registration process." This would also require more work on the part of the TMC. One positive observation is that the TMC would then be responsible for establishing guidelines to become a "registered member" and maintain a valid list of state maintenance councils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The consensus of the Task Force was that unless state trucking associations are supportive and involved in developing a state maintenance council, the likelihood of such a council being successful is slim, but not impossible. Strong volunteer leadership will be required in either case and unless a fleet is willing to allow senior maintenance management to spend a good deal of their time developing a maintenance council, the administrative and organizational duties are best left to the state trucking associations.

TMC may see some increased opportunity for membership and dues by helping develop guidelines for a registration process of state maintenance councils. However, the real value would simply be for the TMC to publish and maintain an accurate list of state maintenance councils without a list of requirements. A simple registration form, signed by each state trucking association president, verifying that an active maintenance council does exist within their state is sufficient.

The long term benefit for TMC would be to gain access to each state's list of members. This could then be used as potential candidates to increase TMC's membership.

The Task Force, therefore, recommends that TMC develop a simple registration process as outlined above and publish annually a list of state maintenance councils. It is also recommended that the president of the state trucking association sign off, certifying that their state has an active maintenance council. □