TEC SUPERTECH2026

NATIONAL TECHNICIAN SKILLS COMPETITION

RULE BOOK & GUIDELINES

Technology & Maintenance Council
American Trucking Associations, Inc.

COUNCIL OF ATA

National Technician Skills Competitions

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Technology & Maintenance Council's National Technician Skills Competitions — TMCSuperTech — is an annual event held in conjunction with TMC's Fall Meeting. TMCSuperTech 2026 — which will take place September 20-21 in Pittsburgh, Pa., — is organized by TMC's Technician & Educator Committee (TEC).

This year's TMCSuperTech competition will feature two tracks — a professional track for all types of technicians; and a student track for those currently in school or those who are six months or less from graduation. Everyone who registers for the professional track will be eligible to win the Grand Championship in 2026. This year, winners of verified state maintenance council/trucking association competitions will be eligible to compete for a special "Champion of States" award in addition to the overall Grand Championship. The entry fee is also waived for verified 2026 state champions, as has been the case in previous years.

NOTE: For 2026, the professional track competition will be limited to no more than 108 technicians (subject to change). The Hands-on Skills Challenge portion will take place on Sunday, Sept.20.

The orientation will take place as part of the first rotation of Sunday's Hands-on Skills Challenge rounds on September 20. The Sunday schedule will run from approximately 7 am to 6 pm, immediately after which we will take group pictures. The written test will take place Monday morning from 7:30-8:30 am.

As in previous years, the TEC will also conduct a Technician Training Fair in conjunction with the competition. For 2026, it will be held on Monday, Sept. 21. This year's Fair features three training sessions, and a Tool Box Talk session. Training fair participants will receive certificates of attendance for all sessions attended. The event will conclude with the TMCSuperTech 2026 Awards Banquet on Monday, Sept. 21 from 7:30-9:30 pm.

TMC's National Technician Skills Competitions and Technician Training Fair are closed events. You must be a registered meeting or competition attendee to attend either event. The Competition is open to any actively employed commercial vehicle technician. However, competitors must be TMC Technician Members to compete.

Non-members will become technician members for the remainder of the year, once they've paid a $515 entry fee. The registration fee for technician members is $365. Verified grand champions of 2026 State Trucking Association technician skills competitions may enter the traditional competition track without fee and will be eligible to compete for a special "Champion of States" award in addition to the overall Grand Championship.

GENERAL RULES

DESCRIPTION

TMC's National Technician Skills Competitions—TMCSuperTech— is an annual event held in conjunction with the Council's Fall Meeting. For 2026, TMCSuperTech is a one-day hands-on professional track for all types of technicians. For 2026, all competitors will compete in Sunday's Hands-on Skills Challenge. We start on Sunday at 6:30 am with an orientation, followed by skills

station challenges, which run from 7 am - 6 pm. Monday features the ASE Written Test from 7:30-830 am. No more than 108 technicians will participate in 2026 (subject to change). It is expected that all skills stations administered during TMCSuperTech will be based on TMC recommended practices, whenever applicable or appropriate.

WHO MAY COMPETE

The Competition is open to any actively employed commercial vehicle and/or trailer technician. However, all competitors must be TMC Technician Members. Active members shall be eligible to enter the competition for a $365 registration fee. Non-members will become members for the remainder of the year after having paid a $515 entry fee. [Become a member at *https://tmc.trucking.org* or by calling TMC offices at 703-838-1763.]

Verified grand champions of 2026 State Trucking Association technician skills competitions may enter the traditional competition track without fee and will be eligible to compete for a special "Champion of States" award in addition to the overall Grand Championship.

Grand Champions of previous TMC National Technician Skills Competitions will be eligible to compete — provided they have not won consecutive national championships in the immediately previous two years. Starting in 2019, an individual who has won three national championships may not compete again in the professional track the following year; however, they may compete in other competition categories, if offered, in a given competition year. Persons falsely identifying themselves will be disqualified.

AGREEMENT AND RELEASE

In consideration of being permitted to participate in "TMC's National Technician Skills Competitions—TMCSuperTech 2026" and be eligible for awards offered, participants hereby stipulate and agree to the following:

1. Competitor acknowledges that he or she is not in the employ of American Trucking Associations, Inc. (ATA).
2. Both as to himself or herself and his or her heirs and personal representatives, competitor releases TMC/ATA, its directors, employees, agents and/or any of its affiliates from any and all liability and any right of action that may arise from any damage or injury which may be received while attending or participating in said "TMC National Technician Skills Competitions—TMCSuperTech 2026."
3. Competitor grants TMC/ATA and its designated agencies exclusive rights to make use of information about himself or herself, along with photographs subsequently taken under TMC/ATA's direction, in publicity and advertising activities. Competitor further agrees to make himself or herself available for publicity enterprises arranged by TMC/ATA, with newspaper/magazine/ media writers and radio and television personnel.
4. Competitor will be bound by all orders, rules and regulations governing "TMC's National Technician Skills Competitions—TMCSuperTech 2026" while participating in said competition.

This agreement and release was part of the Technician Competitor Registration Form which all competitors used to register for the competition.

Competitors must be valid commercial vehicle technicians whose primary job responsibility is servicing, repairing and/or maintaining vehicles/equipment (at least 75 percent or more of their job function). Technicians with some supervisory responsibilities may compete as well — as long as their primary role is serving as a commercial vehicle technician.

Winners will be named for each individual skills station, as well as the top three highest overall scores. A trailer champion will also be named based on the highest score attained from those entering the trailer category (subject to adequate participation level). Those wishing to be eligible to win the trailer champion title must declare themselves as "Trailer Technicians" on the competition registration form, and in doing so they will not be eligible to compete for the title of overall TMCSuperTech Grand Champion.

REGISTRATION

Registration forms can be found online at *https://tmcfall.trucking.org/register*. Competition registrations must be received by August 21, 2026. Only pre-registered competitors will be eligible to compete. Competitors will be sent a confirmation of their registration and housing accommodations once their registration has been processed.

COMPETITION LOCATION

TMCSuperTech 2026 and the TEC Technician Training Fair will be held at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. The address for the facility is 1000 Fort Duquesne Blvd, Pittsburgh, PA 15222. TMC host hotels include the neighboring Westin Downtown and Omni William Penn hotels. Registration and badge pickup will be located at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, and will be open on Saturday, September 19 from 9 am to 6 pm.

COMPETITION FORMAT

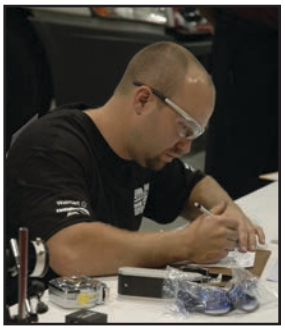
The Hands-on Skills Challenge for the professional technician track takes place Sunday, Sept. 20 from approximately 7 am to 6 pm. Breakfast and Lunch will be provided on Sunday. The orientation will take place on Sunday, Sept. 20 from 6:30 - 7 am, immediately prior to the first rotation of the professional track. The ASE Written Test will take place on Monday, Sept. 21 from 7:30 - 8:30 am. Breakfast will be provided on Monday. A maximum of 108 competitors will compete in 2026 (*subject to change without notice prior to competition start*). Following the Sunday skills stations, group pictures will be taken in the competition hall.

This year's TEC Technician Training Fair will be held on Monday, Sept. 21. The Fair is open to all registered attendees and competitors. The event will conclude with the TMCSuperTech 2026 Awards Banquet on Monday, Sept. 21 from 7:30-9:30 pm.

PROPER ATTIRE

All competitors must wear work appropriate long pants and work shoes meeting accepted safety standards. Official competitor caps and T-shirts will be provided at registration for Sunday's competitors *and must be worn*. **No other hat or shirt will be permitted.** Other safety-related items, such as protective eye wear, will be provided by TMC as needed at each skills station. Competitors may wear company-branded attire for Monday's ASE Written Test.

SAFETY



Safety glasses with side shields (provided by TMC) must be worn at all times during the competition, unless otherwise directed by a specific station chairman or judge. Standard shop safety procedures must be followed at all times. All spills must be cleaned up immediately. Any accident or injury must be reported to the section judge.

NOTE: Competitors may bring their own personal protective equipment for use during the competition.

COMPETITORS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Every effort will be made to accommodate competitors with special needs. These needs must be identified on the contest registration form prior to competition.

TOOLS AND PARTS

All tools, manuals, and equipment will be provided by Competition organizers. Competitors may bring their own personal multimeter and flashlight for use during the competition if they so choose (no other personal tools permitted or needed).

SCORING

The Professional Technician Track is designed to measure thorough knowledge of commercial vehicles, including both theory and practical application.

The competition will include a written test covering the various competition areas. The test will be prepared and administered by the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE). This year, the Written Test will take place from 7:30-8:30 am on Monday, Sept. 21.

The ASE-administered Written Test will count 300 points; everything else counts for 100 points per station. Winners of all individual skill stations will be recognized during the Monday evening Awards Banquet.

Tiebreakers in individual workstation and/or final scores are predetermined by the TMCSuperTech competition committee prior to the competition and reviewed annually based on any changes in workstations. Each station will be won by the highest score in each specific workstation, with appropriate tiebreakers used as needed. The ASE Written Test score is to be used as the first tiebreaker in all cases.

Scoring at all stations shall be done by workstation judges using a detailed station score sheet developed by the station technical committee. Judging scores will reflect an assessment of technical skills and knowledge, accuracy, and quality of workmanship. All decisions by the station judge chairman will be final. Scoring for each of Sunday's skill stations will be based on 100 points (except for the ASE written test which will be worth 300 points) and each competitors' final score will be the total of all stations.

TEAM COMPETITION

TMC will conduct a team competition for those companies wishing to participate. Teams are limited to one per company, and consist of exactly two individual competitors. An authorized representative from each company must inform TMC before the competition starts if it wishes to compete in the Team Competition and if so, who its two designees will be for its team. Team scoring will be based on the individual competitors' performance.

STUDENT COMPETITION

TMC will conduct a student competition for post-secondary technician students during TMCSuperTech 2026. The event — TMCFutureTech 2026 — will be held in parallel with the professional track on Sunday, Sept. 20 from approximately 7 am to 6 pm in the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. Details on the competition appear in the *Student Competition Rule Book and Guidelines*.

PRIZES

All competitors will receive a gift bag provided by Competition donors. (Note: Prizes are subject to change without notice.)

Grand Champion

The First Place Grand Champion will receive a trip to the 2027 Daytona 500, along with other valuable prizes. A trophy, engraved with the Grand Champion's name, will be provided to the winner. Also provided are: $500 gift card from TMC; $500 gift card from Truck-Lite; a top-of-the-line tool box is also provided courtesy of Snap-On Tools; a BlackHawk Dream Shop from Blackhawk Industrial; and a $1,000 gift card and a tool bag full of Noregon swag, courtesy of Noregon.

Second Place

The Second Place winner will receive a trophy, $250 gift card from TMC; $300 gift card from Truck-Lite; and a $500 Visa Gift Card and a toolbag full of Noregon swag.

Third Place

The Third Place winner will receive a trophy, $250 gift card from TMC; $200 gift card from Truck-Lite; and a $250 Visa Gift Card and a tool bag full of Noregon swag.

Skills Challenge Station Winners

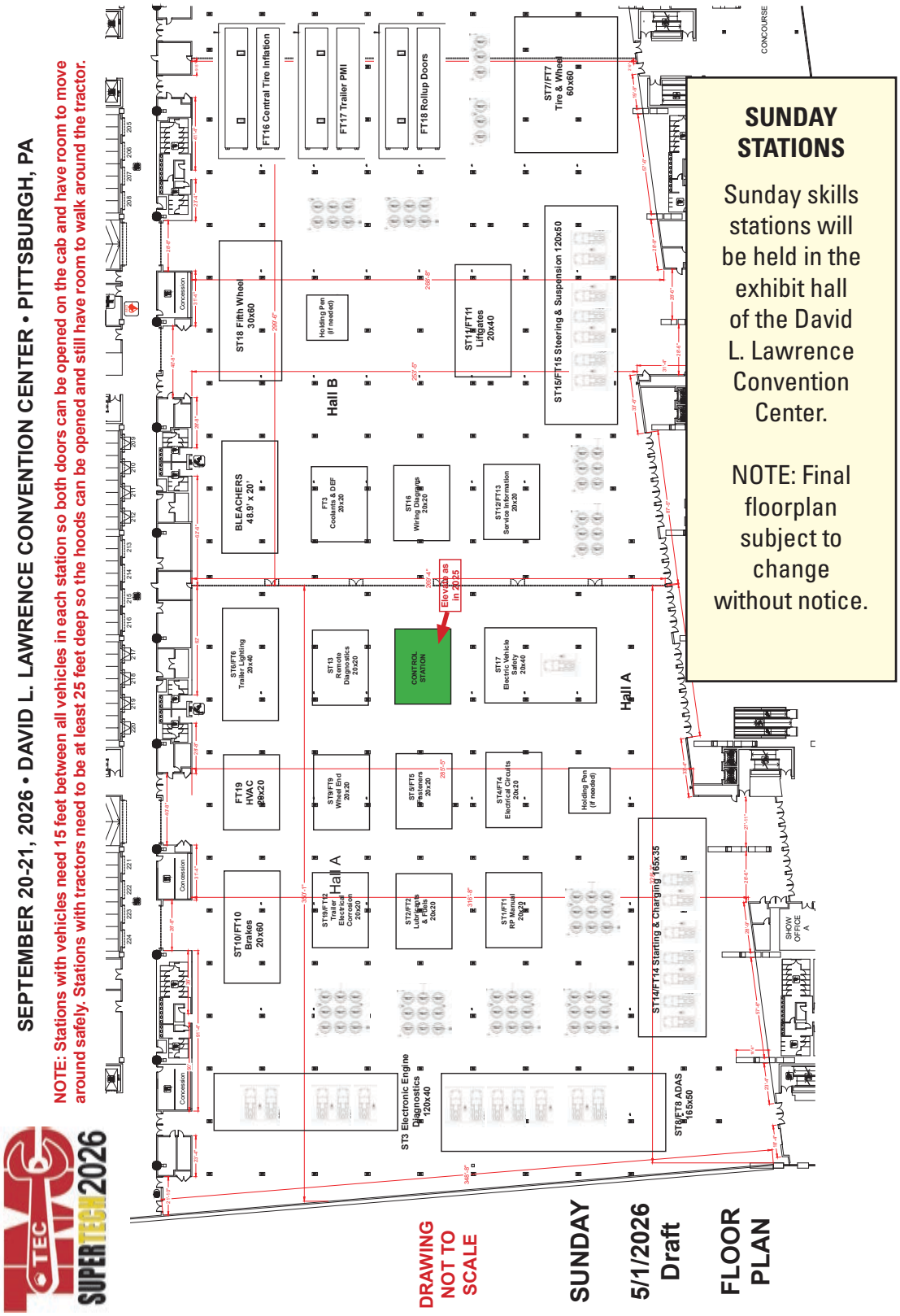
Individuals with the highest scores at each individual Hands-on Skills Challenge station will also receive certificates of recognition. All station winners will receive a hose install tool from Aperia Technologies.

JUDGING GUIDELINES

Judges will consist of recognized experts within each contest area. Each Skill Station Evaluation Sheet and task will be prepared by each individual station chairman and that Station's committee. Point assessment for each task will be specifically listed as part of the contest evaluation sheet to easily gauge competitor ability. Those points will be totaled by the individual competition chair or assigned individual to achieve possible maximum points for that contest. Competitor questions regarding individual issues will be brought immediately to attention of the competition chair. Should personal/professional recognition of competitor be known by the judge, that judge is to be recused and replaced with another judge for that competitor evaluation procedure. Judge can resume normal responsibilities after that competitor has finished specific evaluation.

What to Expect on the Competition Floor

In this section, you'll find a floor plan layout and several photos that will give you an idea what to expect the competition floor to look like upon your arrival. Things move fast on the competition floor and there is a lot of activity going on simultaneously.



SUNDAY STATIONS

Sunday skills stations will be held in the exhibit hall of the David L. Lawrence Convention Center.

NOTE: Final floorplan subject to change without notice.

8
36

Ryder

SKILL STATION GUIDELINES

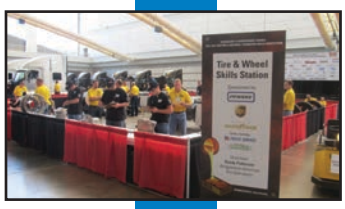
The Professional Track will consist of the following skill areas:

SUNDAY: —

There will be a total of 19 skill stations in **Sunday's Hands-on Skills Challenge**. Each station, featuring hands-on and/or table-top equipment mock-ups, will be divided into 5 substations (subject to change). Each station rotation will last 23 minutes followed by an seven-minute reset/rotation/instruction period. At end of 23 minutes, with appropriate signal, competitors will be escorted to next contest within rotation. Sunday will feature two breaks, and a lunch period.

The 19 stations are (subject to change):

- ST1 RP Manual*
- ST2 Lubricants & Fuels*
- ST3 Electronic Engine Diagnostics
- ST4 Electrical Circuits*
- ST5 Fasteners*
- ST6 Trailer Lighting*
- ST7 Tire & Wheel*
- ST8 ADAS*
- ST9 Wheel End*
- ST10 Brakes*
- ST11 Liftgates*
- ST12 Service Information
- ST13 Remote Diagnostics
- ST14 Starting & Charging*
- ST15 Steering & Suspension*
- ST16 Wiring Diagrams
- ST17 Electric Vehicle Safety
- ST18 Fifth Wheel
- ST19 Trailer Electrical Corrosion



NOTE: There are no Holding Pens for the professional track this year.
* Station is also included in TMCFutureTech as a shared station.

MONDAY: —

PT0: ASE Written Test (separate from the skills station rotations, takes place from 7:30-8:30 am.

RULES FOR ALL COMPETITORS ON COMMUNICATION DURING THE EVENT

Communication between competitors and spectators during the competition is prohibited (this includes individuals from a competitor's own company). Spectators are to be in the viewing area outside of the skill station. Authorized individuals may enter individual skill stations for means of documenting or administration of contest activity. Possession and use of cell/smart phones, smart devices or other camera/ communication devices by competitors in the contest area is prohibited during the competition. Once all competitors have completed the skill station challenge, competitors will be held at said skill station until it is determined all scores have been received and properly recorded. Violators will be given one warning from the station chairman or station judge if this infraction is observed. If the violation occurs a second time during the same station, the competitor will be disqualified from the station and receive a "zero" score for that station. If the infraction is observed at more than one station during the competition, the competitor will be disqualified from the entire competition.

What to Expect at Each Skill Station

SUNDAY: Hands-on Skills Challenge

ST1. **RP Manual** — This challenge will consist of answering written questions based on sections of TMC's *Recommended Practices Manual* and stating which RP provided you the answer.

ST2. **Lubricants and Fuels** — This station will test knowledge of lubricants and fuels along with diagnostic-related issues.

ST3. **Electronic Engine Diagnostics —** Diagnose, service, and repair electronic engine and issues and failures. This station will test a technician's general system knowledge along with knowledge of problem areas/ failure modes associated with electronic engine systems. They will identify failure modes and corrective actions of common failures. All equipment necessary for the completion of all objectives will be located at each work station.

ST4. **Electrical Circuits** — Technicians will be asked to identify and check resistors, test and record the voltage values, measure voltage drops, and determine current loads on a test board. Technicians may use their own multimeter or a multimeter that will be provided.

ST5. **Fasteners** — Competitors will demonstrate their knowledge of rivets, threaded fasteners, and fittings through a 35-question multiple-choice examination. Competitors will examine a variety of components and answer questions related to their identification, function, and use. Approved tools and reference materials will be provided to assist participants, although not all answers are contained within those resources. A strong understanding of industry practices and hands-on field experience will be an advantage.

ST6. **Trailer Lighting**—This station will challenge technicians' knowledge of trailer lighting and electrical systems. You will check all safety lighting for proper operation and FMVSS 108 compliance; diagnose any safety lighting problems and indicate whether the problem is lighting or wiring related; verbally explain each task performed.

ST7. **Tire and Wheel —** Troubleshoot, service and repair of tire/wheel systems. Competitors will be expected to diagnose tire, wheel and fastener issues found in everyday fleet maintenance operations. They will also be asked to perform specific tasks encountered during those maintenance operations. Competitors will be asked questions in written format pertaining to the same or additional maintenance practices. All information needed to prepare for these tasks to be performed or questions to be answered can be found in published service literature or TMC's RPs.

ST8. **Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) —** This station is focused on the unique demands of commercial vehicles by challenging technicians with diagnosing and troubleshooting complex safety technologies including: collision mitigation, adaptive cruise control, lane departure warning, blind spot monitoring, and camera/radar-based systems.

ST9. **Wheel End —** Troubleshoot, service and repair wheel ends. Competitors will answer questions and complete tasks relating to the identification, inspection, installation, and repair of wheel end components found on Class 8 trucks and trailers. Competitors must be able to use torque wrenches, dial indicators, and other common hand tools used in the installation and repair of wheel end components.

ST10. **Brakes —** Troubleshoot, service, and repair of air brake systems and wheel end braking systems. The Brake Station will challenge the competitor on proper inspection, measurement, and diagnosis of the tractor and trailer foundation brake components. Competitors must advise and document any issues related to preventive maintenance or any out-of-service condition.

ST11. **Liftgates** — Competitors will be expected to troubleshoot and repair liftgate system issues found in everyday fleet maintenance operations. Competitors will be required to complete several hands-on tasks associated with the troubleshooting of operational issues that can occur with the Maxon BMR series lift gate. Contestants are required to show their fault tracing ability as well as be able to use common hand tools, wiring diagrams and manuals used in troubleshooting and repair of these operational issues.

ST12. **Service Information** — Demonstrate ability to retrieve service information from current accepted industry sources. Competitors will be tested on their ability to use online repair information to diagnose and fix maintenance problems they are likely to encounter in their jobs. Using supplied computers, Technicians will use the Mitchell1 Truck Series Live on-line program to look up and answer 20 questions in the time allotted. The categories include Repair, Trouble Code, and Labor Guide Questions.

ST13. **Remote Diagnostics —** This station will test your ability to decide the appropriate course of action to take on equipment maintenance and repair based on information supplied from remote diagnostics.

ST14. **Starting & Charging —** This station assesses a technician's ability to diagnose and resolve issues related to starting and charging systems. Utilizing information from TMC's *Recommended Practice Manual*, a digital multimeter, and utilization of the Autometer BCT 200J Automated Tester. The station ensures that technicians are proficient in general knowledge, practical skills, and on-vehicle diagnostics. This evaluation covers various aspects of starting and charging systems, assuring that technicians are equipped with the necessary expertise to maintain optimal performance.

ST15. **Steering & Suspension —** This station is designed to test the technician's knowledge and skills in the following key areas as they relate to vehicle handling, stability, and driveability on our roads to ensure safety, reliability and cost minimization. These areas consist of component identification, component inspection and

testing methods, vehicle alignment terminology, vehicle alignment measurements, specifications and adjustments as outlined in TMC Recommended Practices.

ST16. **Wiring Diagrams** — Technicians should be able to look up wiring schematics and pinpointing specific information based on a series of scenarios. Using computers, technicians will use the MOTOR FleetCross Truck Service on-line program to look up and answer 20 wiring diagram related questions in the time allotted.

ST17. **Electric Vehicle Safety**—This station will test the technician's knowledge on general safety and procedures when repairing low voltage components on a high-voltage vehicle. This station will be centered more around high-voltage safety awareness than actual technical aspects of operation and/or repair of an electric vehicle.

ST18. **Fifth Wheel —** Demonstrate ability to conduct a hands-on diagnostic and preventive maintenance inspection specifically for the fifth wheel. This station will feature test questions related to all coupling devices and standard industry fifth wheels. Competitors should come prepared to address hands-on inspection and diagnostic procedures, as well as written questions related to the mechanical functions, safety, provided by each tractor OEM and fifth wheel manufacturer.

ST19. **Trailer Electrical Corrosion** — This station will test your ability to detect possible corrosion in a wire/cable and then complete a proper repair using the tools and items provided. Training material can be found in TMC Recommended Practices and TMC's Corrosion: Complaint, Cause and Correction Manual (Item T0631).

MONDAY:

PT0. **ASE Written Test** — This is a 65-question written test covering the various competition areas, prepared and administered by the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE). This station takes place from 7:30 - 8:30 am on Monday, Sept, 21.

AFTER THE COMPETITION IS OVER. . .

All competitors are invited to attend any of our special training sessions Monday as part of TEC's Technician Training Fair. See the onsite meeting program for more information.

AWARDS BANQUET

Our awards banquet for TMCSuperTech 2026 will be held on Monday, Sept. 21 from 7:30 to 9:30 pm. Presentations will be made to first, second and third place winners as well as to those who placed first within each individual skills station. All competitors are invited to attend!

RECRUITING:

Companies are not permitted to recruit professional technicians during TMCSuperTech 2026, as per guidelines recommended to TMC by its Technician & Educator Committee (TEC). Violations will be addressed expeditiously by TMC.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, or to get answers to a question that still has not been answered for you, please feel free to visit our website at *https://tmc.trucking.org/tmc-special-programs* or call TMC offices at (703) 838-1763.

POLICY CLARIFICATIONS FOR 2026

POLICY ON WORKSTATION FORMS, TEST AND SCORE SHEETS
Workstation chairs must submit their tests, answer keys and supporting documentation to TMC's Executive Director Robert Braswell (rbraswel@trucking.org) and the Competition Chairman Randy Patterson (PattersonRandy@bfusa.com) by no later than July 24 for review, processing and production. Station chairs may not produce their own materials and bring them onsite without prior review of the materials.

POLICY CLARIFICATION ON ONSITE TRAINING
A request has been made of TMC by several groups for permission to hold vendor-conducted technician training onsite in Pittsburgh immediately prior to our TMCSuperTech event for the benefit of their technicians who are competing. While TMC has approved internal "boot camp" training in the past, those events have always to our knowledge been conducted internally by the fleet/service dealer for its own use. It is the TEC's position that having vendors conducting training for a select fleet or service provider onsite during the window of the TMC event/competition (including setup days) has the potential of compromising the competition and may lead to accusations of favoritism by either the vendors involved or TMC. Therefore, the TEC will not permit the practice to occur.

EXCEPTIONS: If the training is to be made available to all competitors, that is fine. If the training conducted by the fleet/service dealer's own personnel for their own benefit, that is also fine.

POLICY ON NOISE/TALKING AT OR NEAR SKILLS STATIONS DURING THE COMPETITION
Extraneous noise, talking, and/or extended conversations are prohibited during the competition period at or near skills stations in progress — unless it is directly pertinent to the operation of a skill station itself.

POLICY ON SKILLS STATION ACCESS DURING THE COMPETITION
Only authorized individuals may enter the skills station area. Authorized individuals include the station chairman, station officers and volunteers, judges, TMC staff, competition officials, and TEC officers.

POLICY ON COMMUNICATION BETWEEN COMPETITORS AND SPECTATORS DURING THE COMPETITION

Violators will be given one warning from the station chairman or station judge if this infraction is observed. If the violation occurs a second time during the same station, the competitor will be disqualified from the station and receive a "zero" score for that station. If the infraction is observed at more than one station during the competition, the competitor will be disqualified from the entire competition.

POLICY ON COMPETITOR QUALIFICATIONS TO COMPETE

Competitors must be valid commercial vehicle technicians whose primary job responsibility is servicing, repairing and/or maintaining vehicles/equipment (at least 75 percent or more of their job function). Technicians with some supervisory responsibilities may compete as well as long as their primary role is serving as a commercial vehicle technician. Grand Champions of previous TMC National Technician Skills Competitions will be eligible to compete—provided they have not won consecutive national championships in the immediately previous two years. Starting in 2019, an individual who has won three national championships may not compete again in the professional track in the following year; however, they may compete in other competition tracks if offered in a given year. Persons falsely identifying themselves will be disqualified.

POLICY ON COMPETITOR USE OF CIGARETTES, CIGARS AND VAPING PRODUCTS

Use of cigarettes, cigars, and/or vaping products is prohibited on the competition floor during the competition window. Use of these products is permitted during official competition breaks under chaperone supervision.

POLICY ON COMPETITORS AS JUDGES

For those competitions which utilize a two-day format with a finalist cutoff round, those competitors who did not make the finals may not serve as judges on the second day of said competition. This is not applicable to TMCSuperTech 2026 as it only features one day of hands-on skills stations.

HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL TECHNICIAN SKILLS COMPETITION

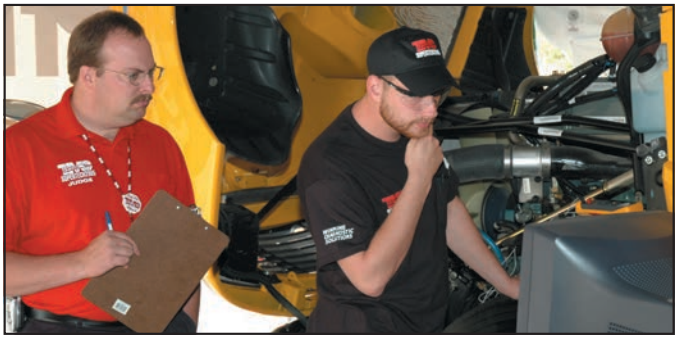
(Reprinted From Our 10th Anniversary Rule Book)

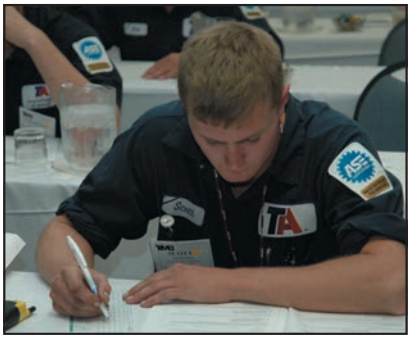
TMC's Professional Technician Development Committee (PTDC) began more than 10 years ago with an abstract idea to elevate and honor the industry's truck technicians. The passing of the 10th anniversary of the National Technician Skills Competition is a good mile post to reflect on the success born of dedication and hard work, generosity of sponsors, selflessness of the PTDC team, volunteers and their companies. And, even more so, at a time when an uncooperative economy often underscores the values of industry leaders dedicated to the success of technicians.

TMC developed the national TMCSuperTech competition as a way to recognize truck technicians and promote the career opportunities for heavy-truck technicians. The competition showcases the skill and knowledge of trucking industry technicians and increases the visibility of available career opportunities.

"Given the pace of technological change, being a heavy-truck technician is truly one of the most challenging and skilled jobs in our economy," said Carl Kirk, TMC executive director. "The knowledge base that these folks have to master is truly amazing. It's entirely appropriate that TMC honors the best-of-the best of our industry."

The genesis of trucking's National Technician Skills Competition traces back to local efforts in Arkansas aimed at recognizing technician excellence. "The origin of TMC's





national program, I feel, goes back to Jim Robertson who worked at McKee Foods. It was his idea to have a technician competition in Arkansas in early 2000 and we rolled out our state competition in 2002. During my tenure as TMC General Chairman, we took his idea to the national level and with a great deal of assistance from many people, developed what we know now as PTDC and TMCSuperTech," said Mike Jeffress, vice president of maintenance, Maverick Transportation, LLC.

By 2002, several people within TMC had begun expressing a desire to form a group to raise the profile and professionalism of truck technicians on a national level. TMC held its first Technician Training Fair in partnership with the former SAE affiliate Service Technicians Society (STS) at TMC's 2003 Fall Meeting. At the time, STS had a small truck group within a mostly automotive focused organization. By 2004, STS begun the process of being phased out within SAE, and so TMC set upon the task of building upon that first preliminary training fair and launching a national technician competition.

TMC members from various study groups and committees began informal discussions on how to accomplish this goal and by March 2004, a group of individuals successfully petitioned TMC's board of directors to create what would become the PTDC at TMC's 2004 Annual Meeting in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

The core group of individuals who spearheaded the effort initially at TMC were

Mike Jeffress, Brian Strach from Hendrickson, Bill Nash of ArvinMeritor, Guy Warpness of WyoTech, Steph Sabo of Norrenberns Truck Service, Jack Sukala of J. Jeb. Mfg., Dave Dettman, of St. Louis Community College, Chuck Roberts with ASE, Mark O'Connell from Fleet Maintenance magazine, and Robert Braswell, TMC's Technical Director. Mike Walters, with Marten Transport, was the first PTDC Chairman.

By the summer of 2004, the new PTDC was busy exploring the best way to launch a national truck technician competition from scratch. So it turned outside of trucking to the automotive sector and a man with experience coordinating automotive technician competitions — George Arrants, who at that time was employed by SnapOn Tools. "I guess there was a TMC PTDC meeting, and they were talking about the competition, and they had asked if they knew anybody who would be a good candidate to run the competition," recounted Arrants in a February 2006 edition of Fleet Maintenance. "And Guy Warpness with WyoTech — we've known each other for a long time — he and Chuck Roberts of ASE looked at each other and my name popped out. Guy called me and asked me if I would do it, and I said sure."

Arrants had already worked on auto technician competitions with SkillsUSA/VICA, the Greater New York Auto Dealers Association competition, as well as a statewide competition in Texas and others. "I'd been involved in multiple competitions, mainly on the automotive side, so this was no problem. As long as I had the people who were willing to work, and to put in the time, yeah. So I volunteered," said Arrants who has served as TMCSuperTech contest chairman since its inception.

For the first year, the PTDC leadership agreed to a basic competition format. Workstation chairmen would decide the challenges to be tested. Work stations will have a 30-minute limit, with a maximum of 50 competitors; the competition taking eight hours. A pretest/ prescreening process would limit entrants to the top 50.

A rules committee was appointed and included: Bonne Karim, United States Postal Service; Roger Maye, George Arrants, and Jack Sukala. The original work stations chairs were:

- Electrical — Bruce Purkey, Purkey's Fleet Electrics
- Brakes/ABS — Mac Whittemore, ArvinMeritor / John Hawker, Dana
- HVAC — Dave Dettman, STCC
- Steering/Suspension/Tires — John Knutson, Hendrickson
- PMI — Jimmy Mathis, Fedex Express
- Written Test — Kurt Hornicek, ASE

- Engines — Mike Stewart, Lincoln Tech
- Drivetrain — Rick Muth, Eaton, and;
- Service Information — Dave Constantino

Naming the competition would fall to TMC staff, and the official name chosen — the National Technician Skills Competition –mirrored that of ATA's long-established National Truck Driving Championships. However, a "nickname" for the event soon stuck, suggested by TMC's Robert Braswell. "We were looking for a shorter, catchy name that would stick in people's minds. We thought, this is going to be the Super Bowl for technicians so why not 'TMCSuperTech'?" said Braswell.

The competition, held in conjunction with TMC's 2005 Fall Meeting, Sept. 18-22, in Valley Forge, Pa., drew 67 competitors, many of whom were corporate, state and regional technician skills winners. Competitors with the top 50 scores from a written test were tested the following day at skill stations that included: Electronic Troubleshooting, Brakes, HVAC, Engine, Steering/Suspension, Preventive Maintenance Inspection, Drivetrain, and Service Information.

Steve Talmadge, a technician with Premier Truck Centers, Birmingham, Alabama, earned the top overall score from eight skill stations to become Grand Champion of TMCSuperTech 2005. Ryder System technicians Matt Van Zanten, Choctaw, Okla., and Mike Bogard, Neenah, Wis., earned second and third place in the contest. Mr. Van Zanten earned the top score at the Electronic Troubleshooting skill station. Mr. Bogard earned first place at the Steering skill work station as well having the highest score on the written test with 95 out of 100. Work stations winners included:

- Electronic Troubleshooting, Matt Van Zanten, Ryder;
- Brakes, Kenneth Smith, Ryder;
- HVAC, Wayne Lambrecht, FedEx;
- Engine, Steve Talmadge, Premier Truck Centers;
- Steering/Suspension, Mike Bogard, Ryder;
- Preventive Maintenance Inspection, Darrel Gravley, Southeastern Freight Lines;
- Drivetrain, Alan LeFever, Pennsylvania Truck Center; and
- Service Information, Rick Johnson, Middleton & Meades.

The first TMCSuperTech was quite a success. But this outcome was not always assured. "After that first meeting [in 2004] when the subject of the PTDC was brought up, I can't tell you how many people came up to me and thought we were crazy," said Brian Strach. "Why would we want to get the technicians involved and as always our answer was 'why not?'. To think back to all the negative thoughts and how the people involved and the technicians turned this into such a positive part of TMC is something I will be proud of until the day I die. I cannot even phantom the number of hours donated by so many individuals that made everything we tried a success."

"One of my fondest memories," said Strach, "was standing on top of the hill in Austin [at TMCSuperTech 2006] with Mike Jeffress at the opening night reception as all the technicians, their families, employers, and other "regular" TMC members mingled below us having cocktails and food as 'equals' and discussing our great industry together. Mike, Steph Sabo, and I all raised our glasses and toasted each other because this is what we had envisioned for such a long time and to see it happening in front of our eyes was amazing. That memory still gives me goose bumps," he said.

"It doesn't seem like 10 years has gone by already but, reflecting back to Valley Forge, I barely knew anyone. For the techs, it was the same and now, even if you are competing for the first time, you will leave with new friends and a better understanding of your capabilities," said Arrants. "TMCSuperTech provides a stage for technicians who service vehicles day in and day out behind the scenes showcase their skills and interact with other techs in their organization or other companies, that has created a network of friends. Thank you to everyone who has supported TMCSuperTech and the technicians, your investment has paid great dividends," he said.

The competition grew quickly in its first few years, thanks to the support of the PTDC Friend of the Technician Sponsors, and the various skills station sponsors, goodie bag donors, and other supporting companies. By 2008, it had expanded to 15 skills stations and featured 121 technicians vying for 96 finalist spots. By 2013, the contest had grown to a full two-day competition format with 112 finalists competing for top honors.

"Ten years ago we threw a small pebble into the pond when we held the first TMCSuperTech competition. If the truth were known, the organizers were probably more nervous than the competitors were that first day. I could not be more proud of how far reaching the ripples from that first competition have gone," said Roger Maye. "As the years have gone by, we have all become a little less nervous. We have seen the competitors' skill levels improve each year and the work stations have had to respond to try and stay ahead of them."

One unexpected consequence, said Maye, has been how much he has learned through this process. "As I have watched the technicians work to complete the test, I have identified that sometimes our service literature could probably be a little more user friendly." Maye also has been amazed at the resourcefulness and skill of the technicians. "They have managed to break things and attempt to complete our station requirements in ways that I would have never imagined."

One of the unique features of TMCSuperTech has always been its attractive prize packages, which have included trips to the Daytona 500, Brickyard 400, as well as thousands of dollars worth of tools, tool boxes, and other valuable items all made possible thanks to scores of donors and sponsors.

"Recognition of Truck Technicians has been long neglected. Their contribution to the industry and their employer's profitability was never recognized before TMCSuperTech," said PTDC Judges Chairman Tom Tahaney. "TMCSuperTech has shown that our techs are not 'grease Monkeys,' but, are professional technicians in the true sense of the word. They are working on equipment that is more sophisticated than the first lunar lander."

Ten years have come and gone, but the enthusiasm for TMCSuperTech remains strong. Plans are in the works to further enhance the competition with team categories and a student competition for 2014. And as TMCSuperTech enters its second decade, efforts are underway to build the state level of competitions out to include all 50 states, as well as the Canadian provinces and Mexico.

"It's amazing how far we have come and how many people SuperTech has reached since we started with 56 technicians and 5 state competitions in Valley Forge. This year 21 states and a number of companies will hold preliminary competitions to select champions and teams to represent them in the fall," said Bonne Karim, who was PTDC chairman from 2010-2014. "On the other end of the spectrum there are always a few competitors who come on their own without company support to test their skills and learn new things. TMCSuperTech has been instrumental in improving technicians' knowledge and job performance and creating management awareness and appreciation of the critical role technicians play in the company's overall operational success."

"It has been a quick 10 years. I think we have all become better friends and learned some valuable lessons about our products and our industry in general. I am excited to see what the next 10 years will bring for all of us," said Maye.

"Brian, Steph and I visit from time to time still today and we all look at each other with amazement on what the program has become. We are extremely proud that we played a small part in such a wonderful program. I am for ever grateful to these two individuals for pushing me and guiding me to implement what we now know as PTDC during my chairmanship. I will always have extremely fond memories of this time in my life," said Jeffress.

UPDATE: In 2019, TMCSuperTech celebrated its 15th anniversary. While TMCSuperTech 2020 was cancelled due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, TMCSuperTech 2021 was held in a scaled-back one-day format, at which Christopher Tate, Mohawk Trucks, won his second Grand Championship. In 2022, TMC merged the Educator Committee with PTDC, renaming it the Technician & Educator Committee (TEC). The story of TMCSuperTech marches on!

PAST GRAND CHAMPIONS

Steve Talmadge
(2005)

Tyson Sontag
(2006)

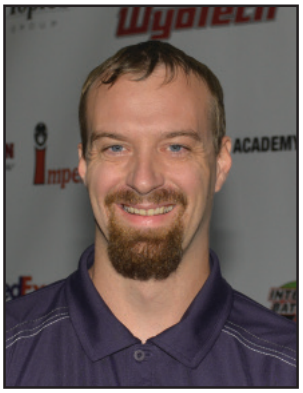
Bryan Lewis
(2007 & 2008)

Christopher Tate
(2009 & 2021)

Jeff Schlecht
(2010 & 2011)

Chris Barnett
(2012)

Mark McLean, Jr.
(2013, 2014, 2017)

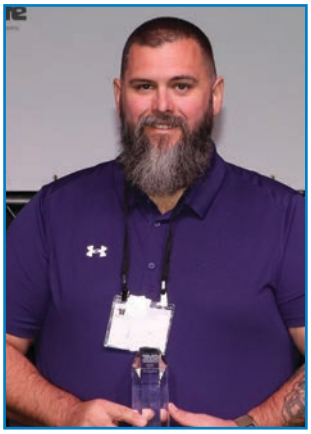


Eric Vos
(2015 & 2016)

Phillip Pinter
(2018 & 2022)

Kelby Bentley
(2019)

Doug Nickles
(2023 & 2024)



Matthew Sloan
(2025)

NOTES

NOTES

Technology & Maintenance Council
American Trucking Associations, Inc.

80 M Street, SE, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20003
(703) 838-1763
(703) 838-1701 FAX
http://tmc.trucking.org

ATA BUSINESS SOLUTIONS