

Battling Mother Nature: Transport America Keeps Its Drivers Safe and Customers Happy with ALK Maps Weather Alerts

“With safety as our core value, Weather Alerts allows for proactive communication and guidance to our drivers. The tool gives Transport America the ability to offer alternative routing and planning when significant weather takes place, ultimately resulting in improved customer and driver satisfaction.”

- Greg Handwerk, VP/GM One-Way Truckload, Transport America

The Company

Transport America provides a wide range of truckload carriage and logistics services in various lengths of haul in the United States, parts of Canada and Mexico. Transport America offers its customers and drivers a variety of service options, including Solo, Teams, Regional and Dedicated. The company has developed a very sophisticated TMS which allows it to provide superior service to customers and drivers.

The Challenge

Ensure driver and freight safety while optimizing fleet utilization in the face of inclement weather.

The Solution

An automated, custom mapping solution built using ALK Maps and its Weather Alerts module that systematically informs Transport America when current and projected routes are scheduled to pass through weather alert zones.

The Results

- Automated process that scans active and future routes within inclement weather areas, sending alerts to Fleet Leaders with potential disruptions, creating increased efficiency of driver monitoring.
- Enhanced fleet utilization by quickly and safely re-routing drivers before and during inclement weather.
- Improved customer relationships and asset management with more accurate delivery expectations.
- Appreciation from drivers that the organization takes proactive measures to keep them safe and empowers thoughtful decision making on the road.

➔ Weather Leads to Change

The winter of 2013-2014 saw the Polar Vortex engulf the entire eastern United States in its frigid grip. Significant winter storms blanketed much of the country in snow and ice.

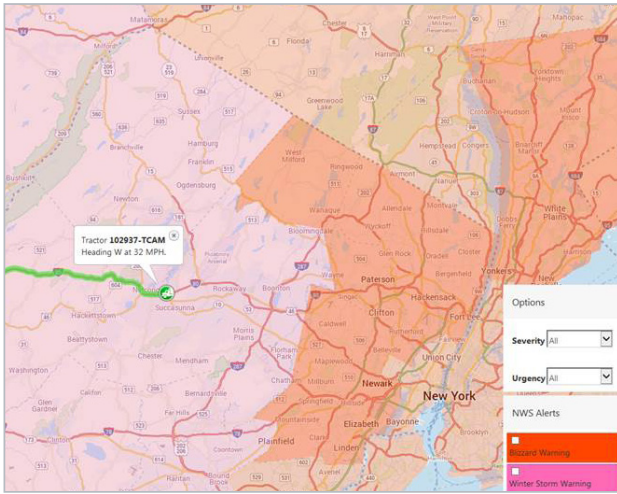
These types of weather conditions cause headaches for any business, resulting in lost productivity, reduced revenue and anxious customers. But for transportation and logistics companies such as Transport America, they also put their most valuable resources, freight and truck drivers, at risk.

To keep drivers safe and deliveries on time, Transport America had to manually compare weather alert information with the current location of its trucks. Fleet Leaders would perform a proximity search within its TMS, find out what trucks were in the affected area and then send out a macro weather announcement to its entire fleet. There was no capacity for automated or personalized warnings and only current routes could be alerted. Future projected routes couldn't be preemptively re-routed or dispatched around impending weather.

Transport America sought a product that could automate this process and provide dynamic asset visualization for planned and future routes heading into areas affected by weather.

“We weren't optimistic when we went to the marketplace, and we ultimately realized that there was no such product available,” said Tom Benusa, CIO at Transport America. “There was no way to automate our manual process of eyeballing weather alert areas, identifying trucks within the affected area and then notifying drivers of the potential dangers.”





These alerts are then directly displayed on the ALK Maps platform and color coded using recognizable NWS color schemes. Users are alerted only if there is a weather issue and can easily see their assets currently within or routed through alert zones. Organizations can use Web services access to perform route intersections against specific events and analyze assets within the

to the Fleet Leaders whose trucks are affected. In addition, Weather Alerts will scan the entire fleet every 20 minutes and produce alerts should conditions change.

Bonnie Audie, fleet team leader, also sees a positive attitude from drivers with this new technology. “When we started notifying drivers in poor weather conditions, they appreciated our proactive communication. If in any case they became uncomfortable continuing the route, they now felt empowered to shut down. Our first priority is their safety and the safety of others; this relieved any stress related to the driver potentially missing a pick up or delivery time. It gave them confidence that we truly care about them and their need to get home safely.”

➔ Birth of Weather Alerts

Transport America turned to ALK to help solve this problem. Already familiar with ALK Maps’ unique truck-focused mapping and route visualization capabilities, Transport America presented ALK with the challenge of creating a weather module for the platform.

The platform had to solve three crucial challenges Transport America was facing. It had to:

- 🔍 Be fully automated and, without human involvement, monitor and visualize trucks in route to see if they are moving within or into an alert zone.
- 🔍 Look at projected routes and see if they will intersect with a weather event.
- 🔍 Create daily customized and personalized weather forecasts for every driver/route.

The result was the ALK Maps Weather Alerts module, which allows companies to quickly and easily identify weather alert information overlaid on the existing ALK Maps route visualization platform to assess the impact on route planning. It pulls over 120 different alert types from the National Weather Service (NWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

inclement alert zones. Fleet leaders, customer service and drivers can then be notified of potential danger or routed safely around alert zones.

➔ Brighter Forecast for Transport America

Transport America began testing ALK Maps Weather Alerts in October 2014 and moved into production use by mid-January 2015. The company already saw the desired results in the 2014-2015 winter season.

“Weather Alerts worked as promised throughout the ultra-snowy winter,” said Benusa. “For example, we were able to book the appropriate number of loads around the multiple blizzards that impacted the northeast. This helped minimize a utilization drop because we had the data and insight far enough in advance to work with our customers and make the appropriate and safest decisions.”

With ALK Maps, Transport America is able to accurately assess and visualize its trucks that are currently on the road as well as routes of future loads.

This information is automatically scanned and integrated with the information provided by Weather Alerts to produce three automated weather emails per day, which are sent directly

➔ Clearer Skies Ahead

While Weather Alerts has been an early success for Transport America, CIO Tom Benusa expects the best is yet to come.

“ALK Maps and Weather Alerts has been a great thing for our organization,” he said. “As seasons change, we’ve begun to incorporate other types of dangerous weather conditions, thunderstorms, tornado, flood and high wind warnings to name a few, into our alert system. As we unpack all the platform has to offer, I’m confident we will use ALK Maps even better in six months than we do today.”

Use ALK Maps to build or customize your own map-centric enterprise applications based on your specific business needs.

For more information on ALK Maps, visit: www.alkmaps.com.