

← Home (/)



## Summerland Express Freight Ltd

### **ACC Fleet Saver Gold Accreditation – “Beyond Compliance: Striving for the Best”**

If you’re shopping in a South Island supermarket, there’s a good chance the groceries in your trolley were delivered by a Summerland truck displaying the ACC Fleet Saver Gold badge. Summerland Express Freight Ltd is a family-owned business that has been operating for more than 22 years, delivering wool, wallboards, BOC gas, foodstuffs and general freight across the South Island.

The Summerland Express Freight Ltd staff are a team of 120, including drivers for their fleet of more than 70 trucks. Running express and bulk freight road services means they have got trucks out across the South Island 24/7. Early adopters to the ACC Fleet Saver programme, Health & Safety Coordinator Jill Evans believes in making safety hands-on: “Health and Safety is all very well in the book, but that’s not what keeps people safe.”

Summerland Express Freight Ltd jumped on board with ACC Fleet Saver while the programme was still in its infancy, becoming one of the first companies in New Zealand to achieve ACC Fleet Saver Gold. Health & Safety Coordinator Jill Evans realised early on that while their existing safety system already ticked many of ACC Fleet Saver’s boxes, the programme encouraged them “to go beyond compliance out on the road and strive for best safety practices”. It didn’t take long for the whole company to get on board and support “safety as a live system”.

In the past few years, Summerland has focused on taking their comprehensive safety system from paperwork to practice. “Anybody can do an audit and have perfect paperwork which says you’re going to do things,” says Jill, but taking them out into the workplace is something else. “It’s actually getting out there, working with the guys on the road, working with the loaders, making sure that all your systems are in place. That’s really what gets you your higher safety level.” ACC Fleet Saver’s umbrella approach means that safety has to be put into practice at all times. “It’s constant. You can’t let the ball drop in any area. Health and safety levels have risen across the board.”

Summerland has secured new contracts and attracted new clients since achieving ACC Fleet Saver Gold. “It’s very competitive in the market out there now, so a lot more companies are looking for operators with an effective safety system in place. Our gold badges are out there on the trucks and are quite a drawcard.”

One thing that made achieving ACC Fleet Saver simpler for Summerland is the regular, ongoing safety training that their drivers are well accustomed to. For example, they’ve just completed a week-long study on fatigue, healthy eating and work-life balance. “ACC Fleet Saver was not something we did as a one-off. Safety is something that we do constantly,” says Jill.

The company has cut down its fuel consumption and is spending noticeably less on vehicle maintenance now that its drivers have been through ACC Fleet Saver training. “We have a big fleet – every 5% you can save is a huge amount,” Jill says.

Jill is quick to point out that financial incentives are just one part of the picture. “It’s not just the savings you get,” says Jill. “This is a family-owned company. It’s so nice to see the team become proud of the image and the name that the company has.”

Improved relationships were an unexpected benefit of ACC Fleet Saver for Summerland. “It’s certainly enhanced our good relationships with our employees - they know they’re important to us,” says Jill. “It’s been nice for the drivers to recognise how important it is to us to get them home safely to their families.”

Jill would happily recommend ACC Fleet Saver to other businesses - regardless of the size of the business. “It makes you look at all your cost saving areas: fuel, tyres, and maintenance costs, and it raises your safety profile out on the road.”

ACC Fleet Saver was a step in the right direction for Summerland. “It’s a high-risk industry out there,” says Jill. “Trucks are getting longer and heavier, and there are more of them out on the road now. ACC Fleet Saver is a good thing for the industry.”

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