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ROD MICINNES has accumulated 50,000 preventable accident-free hours behind the wheel while working for Canadian Freightways. For 31 years, McInnes has been driving to Kitimat every day to make deliveries and has been rewarded for his accident-free record.

# Safest driver on the road

By MOLLY MCNULTY

MANY PEOPLE can claim to be good drivers, but very few could match Rod McInnes's record of two million preventable accident-free miles behind the wheel of a tractor-trailer.

McInnes has been driving for Canadian Freightways for 31 years and was recently been rewarded for his accident-free record by the National Safety Council, which monitors Canadian Freightways employees' driving records.

For his 31 years behind the wheel, McInnes has been making deliveries to Kitimat every day, and to make it along Hwy37 in winter without an accident is one great feat.

Henry Koch, assistant manager for Canadian Freightways in Terrace, says that they are very proud of McInnes as his route is not an easy one to drive.

Koch adds that there's a big difference between tractor-trailer drivers who drive the route from Prince George to Vancouver, as they would

be able to get two million miles a lot easier. But for McInnes, he has to face the highway, the city, backing up and maneuvering to make deliveries, which poses many more risks.

And McInnes's driving secret? Well for him it's simple, "Just keeping my eyes open I guess, preventable driving...It's tough to achieve, even if you dented a truck in the yard, that hitting counts as an accident and you're not eligible."

He also notes that he's a defensive driver, he doesn't speed and he takes his time, waiting for a passing lane instead of passing around a corner.

"There's been lots of close calls on the Kitimat highway every day for 31 years...some winter conditions in the early years there would be four feet of snow overnight...quite tough to stay out of ditches, but it's a matter of common sense," says McInnes. "You react to other drivers and slow down...I've never been a speeder, I'm a cautious driver."

There's only been one incident

for McInnes – while driving around the corner near Williams Creek, a chip truck wiped him out, totalling his truck.

But McInnes was deemed 100 per cent not at fault, as the truck had come into his lane.

McInnes takes the same responsibility behind the wheel at work as he does in his personal life, stating that he's never had a speeding ticket, parking ticket or an accident outside of work, and for 56-year-old McInnes, that's 40 years of safe driving.

Perhaps what makes McInnes such a great driver, besides technique and experience, is his love for the open road.

"I look at it as [someone] sits behind the desk, I sit behind the wheel and I have a TV in front of me, a beautiful piece of road, the scenery, sunsets, thunder storms, I sit there and watch it," says McInnes, who adds that he's seen countless wildlife including moose, deer and bears.

He also loves the day-to-day interaction with the customers,

saying that he's been delivering to three generations of families in Kitimat, from the grandparents, to their children and their children.

McInnes originally set out in life to become a teacher, putting himself through school by driving a truck.

When he came to Terrace in 1978, he wasn't able to find much work and so he continued driving.

"With teaching I found I was cramped, I like the freedom of the road," he says.

McInnes's reward for all his safe driving – around 50,000 hours – is a Caribbean Cruise out of Puerto Rico.

"This company's really good at providing an environment for safety with safe driving awards," says McInnes, adding that each year, the employees receive points for safe driving, which equals out to certain prizes.

So with his two million miles, McInnes received 100,000 points, which he used to help book his trip that he will take next February with his wife.