

**Tire Technology -  
Wide-Base Tires**

*Company Profile*

*Headquarters Location*  
Joplin, Missouri

*Contact:*  
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*Number of Employees:*  
3,000

*Strategy Category:*  
*Tire Technology*

*Number of Trailers:*  
7,400

*Number of Power Units:*  
2,095



# Partner Profile



## Contract Freighters, Inc.

**C**ontract Freighters, Inc. (CFI), founded in 1951, operates over 2,400 tractors and over 7,000 trailers and transports a variety of goods throughout the contiguous United States and Canada. CFI interlines with Mexican carriers at various border crossings to provide through-trailer service to Mexico. In addition to its Joplin headquarters, CFI operates four terminals and numerous drop lots along the border and throughout the United States. CFI and its subsidiaries, CFI Mex, CFI de Mexico, and CFI Logística, have 37 sales offices throughout North America. The driver fleet is comprised of both company drivers and independent contractors.

In late 2002, CFI began looking for ways to improve their fleet's fuel economy. Recognizing that wide-base tires improve fuel economy because they weigh less than conventional tires and have a lower rolling resistance, CFI decided to purchase 750 tractors outfitted with wide-base tires from their original equipment manufacturer (OEM). Each tractor cost only \$40 more than it would have otherwise cost if it did not have wide-base tires. With a fuel economy improvement of 2/10 to 3/10 of a mile per gallon, CFI estimated that the \$40 per truck was paid for within the first 2,500 miles of driving.

In addition to purchasing tractors with wide-base tires, CFI outfitted 100 trailers with wide-base tires. In 2004, CFI estimated savings of approximately 805,000 gallons of fuel due to their wide-base tires. CFI's drivers have said that they prefer wide-base tires for several reasons: 1) their brakes stay cooler and offer more stopping power because the wide-base wheel exposes more of the break drum; and 2) it is easy to determine if a tire's air pressure is low because there isn't another tire beside it; and 3) the tires look attractive.

CFI expects to have 100% of its tractor fleet converted by the end of 2006. According to CFI, this will translate into fuel savings of approximately 2.3 million gallons per year, which will amount to cost savings of approximately \$4.6 million!

