

## Trucking company booms with the oil field

By Jennifer Hiller

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*Lake Truck Lines Inc. President Douglas Cain sits on top of one of his rigs. The company has moved its headquarters from Houston to San Antonio and grown its fleet from 12 trucks to 67.*

Douglas Cain made a big bet on the shale drilling industry in South Texas, and so far it seems to be paying off with a boom for his family's longtime trucking company.

Since moving the company from Houston to San Antonio to get closer to the Eagle Ford Shale oil and gas play, Cain's Lake Truck Lines Inc. has grown from 11 trucks to 67. The company opened a location in Odessa to serve the Permian Basin. And it's started a new subsidiary, Lake Oilfield Services, to provide equipment such as tanks to drilling rigs or hydraulic fracturing sites.

"I knew this Eagle Ford Shale was going to be enormous," Cain said.

The company announced the move to San Antonio last year, and has since grown to include 72 drivers and an executive staff of 15. Its drivers are spread throughout the state, from Houston to Odessa and Corpus Christi, but spokeswoman Terry Place said about 40 percent of the drivers are based in San Antonio.

The company expects to double its business next year, Place said.

Lake Truck Lines purchased 10 acres of land this summer and in August moved into the new site, located on Spanish Grant Road south of Loop 1604 near U.S. 281. The company is looking for office space downtown.

Lake Truck Lines primarily moves frac sand, cement and barite, which is used to add weight to drilling fluids. It's a far cry from the fertilizer that the company originally hauled for farmers.

Cain's late father, Joe Cain, founded Lake Truck Lines in 1949 in Houston. The company worked mostly with agricultural clients but later branched out into delivering materials for the oil and gas industry in Texas and Louisiana.

But after Joe Cain retired in the late 1970s, the business languished. The equipment was sold off, and the company remained an entity only on paper, essentially a corporate shell with the authority to move goods by truck.

Douglas Cain, who had grown up working for the company, decided to try to revive Lake Truck Lines in 1982.

"It took me 18 months to find my first client," he said. Cain would call companies looking for work, and their initial response was not encouraging. "They'd say, 'Drop dead. Drop dead. Drop dead.'"

But Cain persisted. "It took a willingness not to ever quit," he said.

Clients now include oil field service giants such as Baker Hughes, Halliburton and Schlumberger.

Mike Honeycutt, president of Transafe, Inc., a trucking safety consulting business based in Houston, has been working with Lake Truck Lines for seven or eight years, but was shocked by how fast the company grew once it moved to San Antonio.

"Before I knew it, I got up there and there were 37 trucks in the mix. I asked Doug, 'Is your business supporting it?' He said, 'Yes, and we need more trucks.'"

Although Honeycutt advises the company on safety, he said he would turn to Cain for advice as well.

"He wants to continue to see Lake succeed. He feels his dad looking down on him," Honeycutt said. "When I see problems, he's like, 'Fix it.' That's often unheard of."

jhillier@express-news.net  
Twitter: @Jennifer\_Hiller