



Notebook

DASHING THROUGH THE SNOW

You've heard the saying, getting there is half the fun. Well, telephone companies and wireless providers that need to send maintenance and repair crews to remote sites during the winter months would probably disagree.

This year when the snow flies, however, carriers nationwide can hire professionally trained drivers and a high performance tracked snow vehicles (TSVs) to take them to and from their destinations by calling **Snow Transport Specialists L.L.C.** (STS; Littleton, Colo.). STS provides on-call transportation services for an annual retainer or an hourly fee, according to Glen Fishman, vice president of marketing for STS.



Courtesy Snow Transport Specialists

The company plans to have a snow vehicle and operator stationed within 100 miles of each location where it has a contract, says Art Seely, president and CEO of STS. That means a carrier that places an emergency call to STS can put a repair crew in motion quickly he adds.

"We pick you up within two hours and transport your repair crew to the remote site and back. We even bring the hot chocolate," Fishman says.

Carriers that use STS' services do not have to spend money on TSVs and driver training, which takes at least 16 hours. STS' drivers typically log 200 to 400 hours of driving time each year and they can keep repair crews out of trouble. The annual operating cost of owning its own TSV, training drivers and purchasing employee liability insurance costs a carrier more than \$25,600 per year, Fishman adds.

Cost of the service depends on the number of cell sites and the extent of the coverage area and the number of trips a company expects to make during a season, Fishman says. Additional trips are provided at an hourly rate of \$195 per hour for an 8 hour minimum, he adds. "It's almost like insurance coverage," Fishman says. STS' drivers not only know how to drive the equipment, but they also have learned snow survival skills such as starting a fire in the snow and building snow caves. In addition, STS' TSVs are equipped with global positioning satellite navigation and night vision systems for white out navigation.

STS is part of the newly incorporated Snow Operations Training Center, which for the past 10 years, has offered a snow survival school. At the school, students receive intensive extreme climate survival, emergency TSV repair and extrication, medical care, signaling for help, avalanche procedures, and navigation.