

## Farm boy, career trucker Don Logan takes visit to White House in stride, absolutely loves speaking about safety

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SPECIAL TO THE TRUCKER

Growing up on a farm in Kansas, Don Logan had a love for big equipment. At 14, he got his first job with a farmer's permit, driving a grain truck for his uncle.

"My dad was a custom silage harvester," he said, traveling farm to farm, cutting the corn stalk at the ground, chopping it up to feed cattle. "At 16 I started working for him. We would go down into Texas and back into Kansas."

This farm boy who lives in Eskridge, Kansas, just 10 miles from where he was born, and 31-year career trucker had the surreal opportunity to visit the White House with 11 other drivers and 12 trucking CEOs through the American Trucking Associations to discuss health care with President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence in March.

He said it was extremely humbling for a guy sitting out in rural Kansas at his home, hoping he could hold onto his cell signal. "It's still hard to believe I've had the opportunities I've had in my career to be [one of] America's Road Team captains which has led to other cool stuff I've gotten to do," Logan told *The Trucker*.

For 26 years, Logan, 49, has driven for FedEx Freight, hauling general LTL freight. He's had a set Midwest run to Iowa for years, driving a 2014 Volvo VLV day cab.

He's never had an at-fault DOT reportable accident, having been hit by a drunk driver once in 1996.

"Everybody at one time was new to the industry so it's a little intimidating" as a new driver, he said. "You have to approach each day with safety in mind because if you're a safe truck driver," he said, a driver can have their pick of companies. It's best to take things slow and in extreme weather, he added. "You need to get that truck off the road and parked because handling that bad weather only comes with experience."

In 2006, he first started competing in the National Truck Driving Championships and won the state title in Kansas and also Rookie of the Year. Logan has received numerous accolades from competing, including winner of his class 11 times, multiple written, vehicle inspection, grand champion and team trophy awards at the state level and four titles in three different classes at the national level. He was the National Grand Champion in 2012.

"We call it getting bit by the TDC bug," he said, adding that the camaraderie and competition keeps him coming back. "I'm fairly good at the test. I was definitely not a straight-A student or anything like that. There's a book we have to study called 'Facts for Drivers' ... I hit that book fairly hard and most of the time if I don't get 100 percent, I only miss one or two."



Courtesy: AMERICAN TRUCKING ASSOCIATIONS

Though having an opportunity to get a driver's voice heard to legislators and even the president is important, Logan said safety demonstrations for four-wheelers are imperative. "The goal is zero fatalities. The goal is not reduction and until we get to that point there's a lot of work we do," he said. Logan is shown here during the 2012 National Truck Driving Championships where he was named National Grand Champion.

In order to compete, a driver must not have an accident, whether it was their fault or not, in the year leading up to the competition.

"That alone makes you so much more aware of what's going on around you," Logan said.

### Trucking to the White House

Drivers who compete in National Truck Driving Championships are asked if they would be interested in applying for America's Road Team. The team was created in 1986 by

the American Trucking Associations as a national outreach program, selecting drivers with "superior driving skills, remarkable safety records and a strong desire to spread the word about safety on the highway," according to the ATA website, [trucking.org](http://trucking.org).

Logan said he was impressed by the captains' professionalism and how they are "ambassadors to the industry, someone to look up to." He applied in 2011 and in a pool of about 2,200 appli-

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cants, he did not make it to the next round.

"I had already won two national championships. I was wondering what are they looking for?" he said. But in 2013, he made the cut of 34 drivers and went to Arlington for further evaluation, which included mock newspaper interviews and personal interviews.

"The applications they receive are just unbelievable. The type of people I met there had me wondering why was I there," he said. He was chosen with about 20 drivers to be on the Road Team. "It's quite a group of drivers and since then I've been pretty active with them and obviously I've got to thank FedEx for supporting that."

FedEx still pays him when he's out on the road conducting a safety event with students or adults or on Capitol Hill in Washington, making sure the trucker's voice is heard.

Typically, captains spend about two years on the team, but drivers that want to continue are also called upon to continue educating others.

In March, Logan went with other drivers and CEOs to the White House.

"We got to go there and meet the president on the front lawn. It was the first time ATA had been on the White House lawn with their show trucks," Logan said. President Trump came out, spoke a few words, looked at both the drivers and CEOs, and "went to the drivers and started shaking hands. We were all very impressed with that, that he went to the drivers first."

They went to a cabinet room, right off the Oval Office to discuss the high cost of health insurance deductibles for company drivers and how independent drivers found it cheaper to pay the penalty rather than signing up for the Affordable Care Act. Logan said they were there about an hour and a half and also discussed infrastructure.

"[Trump said] 'You guys are out there every day and seeing what's happening to the roadways,'" Logan said. "He definitely knows how important trucking is to our everyday way of life ... I'm proud to be in a position to speak out for drivers."

### **Changing lives**

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"The goal is zero fatalities. The goal is not reduction and until we get to that point there's a lot of work we do," he said.

On average, captains spend about one to two days a month educating at Road Team events. At schools, an important demonstration includes lining up four vehicles around an 18-wheeler and having the kids climb up in the driver's seat. The view "shocks them," Logan said.

"When they get in the truck and can't see any of them, that opens their eyes. It's like we always say, if you can reach one of those kids, it was worth the trip," he said. "... I had parents actually come up to my wife and say, 'I appreciate that blind spot demonstration they did for the kids. I was driving with my child and my child was telling me to stay out of those blind spots.'"

Making sure everyone on the road is safe hits to the heart of this married father of four. His 15-year-old twin sons and 17-year-old daughter are active in sports, which keeps the family busy, he said. Logan also coaches summer league baseball for sophomores in high school. His 27-year-old son had a baby in August, giving him and his wife Pam a grandchild to love and spoil.

"It's provided a great living for me and my family," he said of trucking. "The thing about trucking is there's so many different varieties of trucking you can get into. You can find one you can work with, that works with your family."

