

# VELOCITY VIDEO CASE HISTORY

## A DC VELOCITY SPEED CHALLENGE

### Bale bound

Lifting 500-pound bales of cotton requires a special clamp and a forklift with the power and flexibility to work indoors and out.

COTTON IS ONE OF THOSE COMMODITIES that literally touch our lives every day – from the shirts we put on in the morning to the sheets we crawl under at night. Supplying textile mills with the cotton they need to create so many important products is the role of Staplcotn, the oldest and one of the largest cotton marketing cooperatives in the United States.

Founded in 1921 for cotton growers in 11 Southeastern states, Staplcotn handles one-third of the cotton grown in that region, which amounts to approximately 3 million bales annually, or about 15 percent of the total U.S. crop. The cooperative operates 13 warehouse locations in the Southeast, with its largest facility in Greenwood, Miss. The site features 1.7 million square feet of space spread among 27 storage buildings.

Greenwood is known as a “country warehouse,” where cotton is brought from cotton gins and stored until textile mills need it. The facility handles 300,000 bales annually, and nearly 80 of the 100 companywide forklifts that lift the 500-pound bales are Toyota forklifts.

“We run several different forklifts, but over the past seven or eight years, Toyotas have become the predominant forklifts that we use. They have the lion’s share of our fleet,” says Shane Stephens, vice president of cotton services and warehousing.

#### FROM FIELD TO MILL

Cotton is harvested in a 10-week period that generally runs from late September until early December. After being processed at cotton gins, bales are wrapped and brought to the warehouse for storage. Distribution takes place year-round, whenever textile mills place orders for raw materials. Much of it is exported to countries that produce most of the clothing the U.S. imports back, including China, Turkey, Mexico, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Vietnam.

The Toyota forklifts deployed at Staplcotn’s warehouses are 5,000-pound internal combustion trucks operating on propane. The vehicles

are equipped with special clamps that are used to pick up and transport four bales of cotton at a time, totaling 2,000 pounds.

The forklifts unload trucks at receiving and take the bales to stacking positions inside the various storage buildings at the site, so the vehicles operate both inside and outside throughout the year and must be capable of easily climbing ramps.

Mills order cotton according to specific blends. Forklift drivers retrieve the cotton by bale numbers and take them for loading into overseas shipping containers. Typically, each container holds 88 bales, so there is a lot of lifting and transport required with each shipment.

“The Toyota trucks have plenty of power and very little downtime. They hold up like they said they would,” says Stephens. “There is a reason why I am 80 percent Toyota. It’s because they are good vehicles – competitively priced and efficient on fuel.”

#### FLEET FRESH

To assure that its forklift fleet is operating in top condition, Staplcotn leases its vehicles through Toyota Commercial Finance.

“All of the forklifts I get from Toyota are under full maintenance. Everything is on them,” says Stephens.

The local Toyota dealer serving Greenwood is The Lilly Company, which has operations in Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Alabama. This dealer provides ongoing preventative maintenance and repairs for the Staplcotn fleet and also cycles in new vehicles to assure top performance.

“We keep everything in-house with Toyota and have a good dealer to work with,” says Stephens. “We replace about a third of our fleet each year. With the maintenance we receive, our three-year-old truck now is in better shape than our other trucks were after one year.”

*For more information on Toyota’s full-service product line of forklifts and warehouse equipment, visit [www.ToyotaForklift.com/forklifts](http://www.ToyotaForklift.com/forklifts).*



To see a video of Toyota forklifts in action at Staplcotn, go to [dcvtv.com](http://dcvtv.com) and click on the Velocity Video on Channel 2.