THE U.S. POST OFFICE IS TESTING SELF-DRIVING MAIL DELIVERY TRUCKS

Test Drive

Starting Tuesday, autonomous trucks working for the for the U.S. Postal Service will ship mail across the thousand-mile stretch between Dallas and Phoenix.

Before this two-week trial period, the postal service commissioned teams of third-party drivers to handle the 22-hour trek in shifts, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, making this particular journey a prime candidate for automation via self-driving vehicles.

Cutting Pay

A fully-autonomous truck handling these long stretches could drive down costs for the postal service.

"This run is the sweet spot of where autonomy is valuable," Chuck Price, CPO at TuSimple, the company behind the trucks, told the *WSJ*. "The vehicle can continue operating without the hours-of-service restrictions of a human driver."

But for this trial run, human teams will still supervise the vehicles.

Keeping Watch

For the thousand-mile haul, teams of two will supervise the truck. One person will be in the driver's seat, watching the road and ready to take over the controls. Another will monitor the truck's artificial intelligence so it doesn't do anything unexpected.

"We are conducting research and testing as part of our efforts to operate a future class of vehicles which will incorporate new technology to accommodate a diverse mail mix, enhance safety, improve service, reduce emissions, and produce operational savings," a postal service representative told the *WSJ*.