

# Press Release



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## GREENSBORO, NC, BUS DEALER FIRST TO RECEIVE PLATINUM SUPPORT CERTIFICATION FROM THOMAS BUILT BUSES

**GREENSBORO, NC** -- Carolina Thomas has been certified as the first of two Platinum Support bus dealers in North America by Thomas Built Buses, a division of Freightliner and Daimler Trucks North America.

“The Platinum Support dealer certification means we have successfully implemented the systems, processes and team training to deliver a repair estimate and communicate a completion date to the customer within 24 hours of drop off,” said Tom Schaaf, Vice President and General Manager of Carolina Thomas. “The implications are huge for our customers, because Platinum Support means they can be back on the road faster.”



Instituted by Thomas Built Buses, the Platinum Support program implements lean concepts to continuously improve the customer experience. Dealer certification requires meeting 123 individual criteria in 24 different areas; these standards are sustained by weekly audits across all Platinum requirements.

“It might seem fairly straightforward, but a lot of interlocking processes have to be squarely in place in order to give the customer reliable repair information in a 24-hour

period,” said Kim Hatfield, Carolina Thomas’ Continuous Improvement Coordinator. “It’s been a major investment, but it’s been amazing to see how the Platinum Support lean initiatives we’ve undertaken have impacted our entire organization. It’s evident something is different about the customer experience here at Carolina Thomas as soon as you drive on campus.”

Along the path to Platinum Support certification, Carolina Thomas embraced the “5S” model. According to Schaaf, his Change Management Team intentionally set aside time to step through the following 5S process:

- Sort everything.
- Set everything in order.
- Shine everything.
- Standardize a location for everything in the shop, office and parts.
- Sustain everything with weekly score inspections for each area.

“We have identified and marked a place for everything - even used grease rags,” Schaaf said. “Our technicians are daily on the lookout for ways to add value, reduce waste and raise quality.”

Carolina Thomas has also implemented multiple feedback loops into the customer service process - before, during and after the engagement. “We track everything and measure for how to improve,” said Steve Connolly, Carolina Thomas’ Parts Manager. “A big part of this is asking the customer how we did after we completed the work. Some people in our industry may think this over the top, but just ask any of our team members what this level of commitment means to our customers.”

The downstream value of these continuous improvements is ultimately passed along to the customer. “Through sharpening our delivery model we actually lower our customers’ vehicle life cycle costs,” said Vinny Rivera, Carolina Thomas’ Service Manager. “Because we have carefully scrutinized the repair assessment process, we make better evaluations of exactly what needs to be done. This means there’s less rework, therefore less wear and tear on the buses we serve.”

Carolina Thomas provides Platinum Support for all brands, not just Thomas buses.

“We are doing more than just training technicians,” Schaaf said. “We are developing problem solvers at Carolina Thomas who can evaluate scenarios and get as close to the issue as possible. This approach has a positive impact on our culture and morale, which translates into a quality of work for our customers that our technicians are willing to sign their names to.”

Carolina Thomas is a leading bus dealer in the Southeast, providing sales, service, parts and body shop services for a wide range of buses: activity, child care, church, commercial, healthcare and school. Visit <http://www.carolinathomas.com> to learn more.

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