



AN OPEN LETTER TO THE TRUCKING INDUSTRY

April 16, 2026

To Fleets, Owner-Operators, Distributors, and Everyone Who Depends on Heavy-Duty Brakes,

I've spent 47 years in the friction industry, including 38 years building this company, and I've watched the industry change in ways that deeply concern me.

When I first entered this business, friction manufacturing in the United States was driven by family-owned companies whose priorities were clear: *safety, quality, and long-term responsibility*. These companies took pride in their formulations, their processes, and the lives that depended on their products. Quality wasn't a marketing slogan – it was the foundation of their business.

That began to change when private branding and aggressive cost cutting entered the picture. I witnessed firsthand how the constant chase for “the cheapest product” replaced meaningful relationships with customers and suppliers. Loyalty disappeared. Long-term thinking disappeared. Everything became about price, market share, and volume.

The result was predictable: weakened quality, burned bridges, shrinking margins, and ultimately the sale of once-proud businesses to large public corporations. Corporations that weren't focused on employees, innovation, or sustainable profitability but whose primary concern was improving stock price through acquisitions and short-term growth. I knew then this would lead the industry down a dangerous path.

That realization drove me to start this company.

From the beginning, we faced skepticism. As a regional brand, we were labeled “no-name,” told our materials must be inferior, and forced to defend our credibility at every turn. Instead of cutting corners to win on price, we made a different choice: *we committed to quality*. We studied the science, refined our formulations, invested in technology, and rigorously compared our products against the best in the market to ensure they met (often outperforming) established standards, all while remaining competitively priced.

Today, decades later, the conversation has come full circle. We now find ourselves having to remind the market of something fundamental:

Friction is not a commodity.

Friction materials are not interchangeable parts to be purchased solely on price. They are carefully engineered formulations – scientific recipes – that directly impact safety, performance, and longevity. Treating friction as a commodity with “cheap” as the primary qualifier is a risky mindset, and one that ignores the true cost of failure.

Our message is simple and grounded in nearly five decades of experience: *It's time to look more closely at what we're buying, what we're installing, and what we're trusting with people's lives.*

After 47 years, our position hasn't changed. *Quality still matters.* And it always will.

Respectfully,

Rick Ballew
Founder & CEO