

CUTLINE: JT Smith, Southern State Truck Driving Academy [REDACTED] works with a student on a virtual-reality simulator that allows for shifting and driving training without getting behind the wheel.

Smith said if trucking lines were to shut down, stores would close in a matter of days.

According to the Indiana Motor Trucking Association, the trucking industry lacks 60,000 drivers across the country, and that number could grow to 100,000 in the next several years, WTHR news recently reported.

Smith said autonomous truck technology is still only in the early stages of development and will likely not be fully functional for years.

“I don’t see the demand for truck drivers going away any time soon,” he said. “Autonomous trucks are

Smith, who began trucking nearly 40 years ago, has never stopped loving the road, and he said he hopes to prepare more drivers for a long and rewarding career earning a living behind the wheel.

"I was pretty much born and raised in a milk truck," he said. "I was always in the truck. It is just in my blood. I got my license and started driving at 18. Seven years ago, I got into teaching part of it. I enjoy teaching because I'm hopefully getting more educated, better drivers on the road."

Smith can be reached at 800-628-7722 ext. 4535 or by email at [jtsmith@sscc.edu](mailto:jtsmith@sscc.edu)

The truck diving academy has locations in Wilmington, West Union, Piketon, Jackson, Pomeroy and South Point.

For more information, please visit <https://www.sscc.edu/academics/programs/truck-driving.shtml>

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