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The Best Route for Many Trucks: The Vehicle Routing Problem

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Every morning in front of a distribution center, a line of trucks waits to leave with their loads. There are dozens of stops to make today, and someone has to decide which truck takes which house and in what order. Even for the same parcels going to the same homes, how the routes are drawn makes a big difference in the distance driven, the fuel bill, and the time the driver gets off work. Put simply, the vehicle routing problem is “the problem of finding the set of routes with the lowest total cost when several vehicles leave a depot, divide up the customers to visit, and return.” It was first