

FORS Members' Conference report

9 November 2016



Working together, championing best practice



Introduction



Steve Agg, FORS Conference Chairman

to ensure better operations in line with the FORS accreditation.

Since the establishment of the Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS) in 2008, it has become the recognised standard for safe, efficient and environmentally sound practice amongst commercial vehicles in the UK. Chairing the conference, the Chairman of the FORS Governance, Standards and Advisory Group (GSAG), Steve Agg, welcomed delegates to the first members' conference, acknowledging the growth of the scheme and the many successes achieved over the past year.

Scope

In his opening remarks, Agg reminded delegates that FORS is not a standard that applies only to the Capital, or even just to the south-east of England. It is open to UK and non-UK fleet operators and currently has members across the UK as well as in Europe. To underscore that point, we spoke to Trevor Bush, sector compliance manager for PHS Group plc. A multi-faceted company in the hygiene and waste management sectors, they are based in Caerphilly, Wales, and hold the distinction of being FORS member 000001. What made them be the first to sign up eight years ago, when FORS was born? Bush says, "Fortunately my predecessor had the vision to see that they offered a high set of standards to achieve, exceeding the legal minimum".

The inaugural FORS Members' Conference, held at the National Conference Centre in Solihull, saw over 350 delegates attending, and 25 specialist service providers exhibiting. Designed to champion the many success stories of members, both established and those new to the scheme, it was a day to celebrate all those who have already made significant changes to their transport logistics

He added, "Among our diverse operations, we have a waste management division, where safety has to be a top priority. We're proud to be a FORS Member, and setting FORS standards across all our transport operations has saved us money, as well as proving to our customers that we excel at what we do. It's a badge of honour."

Updates - FORS Standard (version 4.0)



John Hix, FORS Director

document, constantly evolving, that had the central aim of making sure that operators were always at the forefront of compliance, and not merely attaining a legal minimum. "With a central compliance standard like FORS," he said, "operators can be confident that we are monitoring all the relevant changes in legislation that apply to them. Keeping track of it all, would be a significant burden on any individual operator who was not a FORS member".

Hix also said that FORS is making every effort to make the requirements clearer and more digestible, and, in order to maintain the reputation of the FORS Standard, there would be more robust enforcement too. The latest version, 4.0, was launched and published online on 29 September. The new family of FORS documents include all the relevant rules and procedures, with standards to achieve, exceeding the legal minimum". helpful guidance notes, as well as the terms and conditions, and a useful summary of the changes.

John Hix, FORS Director, outlined the ethos behind the FORS documentation, and its objectives. He said, "The FORS compliance paperwork is updated every two years to take account of changes in the industry with new technology for example." He reminded the conference that it was an organic

Hix emphasised to conference delegates, “If there is anything that is unclear to you, please don’t pore over it, we are here to help, please call us.” Citing an example of the type of changes that the FORS Standard 4.0 included, he said that the old D1 standard relating to checks on driver licencing, moves from Silver to Bronze, and the frequency of licence checks will now be against an accepted risk-based scale. Changes to the Gold standard include upgrades on environmental compliance, driver health and fitness, recruitment strategy, noise assessment and alternative fuels. As for a timeline for implementation of FORS Standard 4.0, new FORS registrations have been subject to it since 29 September when it was released online, and renewal audits are subject to the new Standard from 10 November – it is now live for all members.

The CLOCS are ticking

CLOCS (Construction Logistics and Community Safety) standards are a core element of FORS compliance. The recent adjustment of their name, substituting ‘cyclist’ for ‘community’, obviously reflects a pragmatic approach for greater inclusivity, and it’s a timely reminder of the significance of pedestrian risk. Derek Rees fronts the new industry-led team that will drive CLOCS across the UK to collaboratively reduce construction-related road risk. That mission statement underscored the reality that both FORS and CLOCS are not London-centric standards, but ones that apply nationwide.

His opening comments to the conference reminded all delegates of the statistics. He said, “LGVs may only account for four percent of the vehicle miles travelled in London, but in 2015 they were involved in 78% of cyclist fatalities, and 20% of pedestrian deaths. Rees reinforced the good sense of a single standard for the transport sector, saying, “In 2013 there were no less than 11 separate safety standards that applied to commercial vehicle safety, no wonder it was confusing.” He added, “The industry was calling for a sense of order and organisation, and 85% of operators were demanding a single standard. FORS was the answer, with CLOCS a central pillar.”

For those still in denial - both inside and outside the conference - about the issue of cyclist safety in particular, the figures speak for themselves. The number of cyclists in central London during rush hour will soon overtake the number of car drivers, according to new Transport for London (TfL) figures. Published as part of the Travel in London report, they show that the number of car drivers entering central London in the weekday morning peak in 2014 had decreased by more than a half from the year 2000 (137,000 to 64,000), while the number of cyclists trebled from 12,000 to 36,000 over the same period.



Derek Rees, CLOCS Project Director

The message from Rees to the delegates was clear. CLOCS is not just a nice-to-have any more, and he confirmed its future development. “Two hundred local authorities will help to drive it across the UK, and 60 regional industry representatives will organise local meetings. There will also be data collection of near misses (along the lines of those in the airline industry), which will add to accident avoidance expertise. We spoke to Derek Rees away from the conference platform, and put to him the perceived lack of involvement of the cycling community. He said, “Cyclist are not transport professionals, and they fall into a wide variety of user groups. My contention is that FORS members, all commercial vehicle operators in fact, can do great things on a local level with cyclist groups and schools to get over the driver’s point of view - both figuratively and literally.” He added, “In my experience, schemes like trading places, and activities like school visits with trucks, never fail to get the message over.” He concluded, “We need to help cyclists to help themselves.”

Sharing best practice

The voice of operational experience spoke to the conference in the form of Julie Madoui, Head of Fleet and Transport at Skanska UK. Established in Sweden in 1887, and with a UK operation that is one of the country’s premier construction contractors, she was unequivocal in her comments. She said, “Make no mistake, there is a real cost from doing nothing in this arena.” She added, “The reputational damage that can result from not getting your safety and environmental standards up to the mark are enormous, and recovering lost trust is potentially impossible. Setting safe operational practice as a priority after an accident, is simply negligent.” Her goal is to create an injury-free environment in all the workplaces for which she is responsible, and those within her supply chain.

Madoui reminded delegates, “In 2014/15 there were 35 fatalities in the UK construction sector. That’s 35 too many, but in the same period, there were 1,775 recorded deaths on the roads. In any other industry,” she said, “this would be regarded as wholly unacceptable.” Efforts at Skanska over recent years, including better route planning, advice and training for cyclists, improved vehicle systems, compliance auditing, getting common standards accepted by clients, and the establishment of a fleet risk steering group, have all helped to progressively drive down incidents. Madoui was equally forthright about the advantages to the bottom line. She said, “The hard work brings more good news than just the reduction in accident and injury. We’ve saved over £400,000 a year from a cut in our insurance premiums, and another £50,000 per annum on a reduction in penalty charges. Add to that a cut in fuel consumption of 16% from the driver training programmes, and it’s a no-brainer.” She concluded by pointing out that they had a string of awards to show for it, and clients wanting to do business with them because of the strong role safety plays in their supply chain. She reflected a widely understood trend for all professionally-run construction sites in the Capital to demand FORS registration as a pre-condition to contract. That sentiment is spreading country-wide.



Julie Madoui, Head of Fleet and Transport at SKANSKA

The science of compliance

Ian Vincent is FORS Compliance Manager, having served in the Metropolitan Police for 30 years, latterly as Chief Inspector for Roads Policing, and the Safer Transport Command. He's worked closely with TfL, and while his attitude to compliance enforcement looked like 'take-no-prisoners', that was actually good news for all delegates, and all FORS accredited operators. If a standard can be easily debased, manipulated or circumvented, its reputation and worth quickly vanish. Vincent outlined changes to the terms and conditions in FORS Standard version 4.0, including the application of penalties of suspension, termination or downgrading if false information is provided at a FORS audit.

In a pragmatic move however, the need to report a change in OCSR (operator compliance risk score) and any PG9 notices, has been deleted. Vincent said, "It was deemed unreasonable to downgrade a haulier who, by dint of a minor issue, may be temporarily moved to a red score. He noted too that complaints management had become far more complex with multiple channels available to complainants. He said, "With the public having access to email, social media with videography, as well as a direct route to TfL, quick action is needed to establish facts and preserve reputation." He reminded the conference that FORS administrators have access to the results of public inquiries and the decisions of traffic commissioners, but they also have to keep track of relatively simple matters like the false display of FORS stickers.

Among changes that are reportable to FORS, are new operating centres, a change of type of operation, any change in key personnel, and an increase in fleet above 10%. It was also noted that FORS accreditation can apply to selective depots within an organisation, although the spread of the FORS Standard across the UK may well come to make that approach redundant. Vincent concluded by reminding delegates that there is an appeals process, and members should not be worried about using it if they feel unjustly dealt with.



Ian Vincent, FORS Compliance Manager

What to do when it all goes wrong

The conference audience was very attentive when listening to the presentation from John Lawrence, an independent fleet risk specialist, with over 40 years experience in public and private sector fleet management. His focus was on what happens when things go wrong, so the hush was understandable! He asked the conference, “If you get that dreaded phone call, do you know what to do?” The answer from the floor was far from being either distinct or emphatic. “Who will lead any accident investigation?” The questions kept coming. Broadly, the police will lead investigations into collisions on public roads, and the HSE (health and safety executive) will be responsible for looking at incidents on site, or at the workplace. If it’s unclear, both agencies could be involved. Lawrence warned, “You need to be prepared, have a trained appointed person, and be ready to cooperate fully with either of these agencies. They understand that it’s a time of crisis for you, but they have a low tolerance level of incompetence, or poor understanding of the processes. After all, they are well-known and clearly laid down.”

In a statement that concentrated the conference’s mind even further, Lawrence warned, “A road death will be treated as an unlawful killing by the police, and they may apply procedures from the ACPO (association of chief police officers) murder incident manual.” He also warned that the HSE have the same level of powers as the HMRC, and they can remove computers, mobiles and PDAs. He added, “You need to look at how you are managing your business, and ask yourself if you could cope with this.” There could be a wide range of data collected, from drivers hours and maintenance records, to HR and payroll. In all matters, cooperation is key to achieving the best outcome.

A clear policy for handling such a process should be available, and it should be communicated to those who need to know, not simply written and filed. Lawrence further warned that you should be prepared for PACE (police and criminal evidence act) style interviews. He means under caution, and they start with the words, “You do not need to say anything...” Lawrence says those opening words to the caution are good advice; get legal representation.

The HSE (and the police) have the right to interview anyone they deem necessary, and they apparently have an uncanny nose for your disgruntled employee of the month. Issues on the highway don’t necessarily stay confined to the road either. Headlines like, “HSE breach discovered following road accident,” are not uncommon. Lawrence assured the audience that there are FORS toolkits available on these issues, “Just make sure there is someone in your organisation who knows how to use them.” With the fines for a breach of duty of care recently increased to span the chasm between £50 and £10 million, and the possibility of a two-year custodial sentence for any individual deemed culpable, John Lawrence’s closing words needed no repetition.



John Lawrence, Road Risk Compliance Specialist, Prestige Fleet Consultants

Managing Work-Related Road Risk



Dr Shaun Helman, Cognitive Psychologist at TRL

Transport Psychologist Dr Shaun Helman, TRL, drew on his own research when discussing the number of accidents that occur due to those driving for work, as well as casualties either in other vehicles or vulnerable road users. The audience were shocked by the vast difference in the number of fatalities across different types of transport in Great

Britain, as Dr Helman described why Work-Related Road Risk (WRRR) was so important. However, there are ways to manage WRRR and the proactive management of collecting and measuring data, including on incidents and near misses but also mileage and driver behaviour, is a good place to start. Highlighting the importance of supportive leadership, delegates were encouraged to ensure that from the very top all the way through the middle layers of management, including divisional and line managers, employees are brought on board to realise how important safety practices are. Again leaning on his own research, Dr Helman emphasised the importance of raising awareness in organisations, with his work demonstrating that despite a plethora of guidance, many participants did not have access to adequate safety resources or had not heard of them.

Intelligent mobility can lower emissions

Emissions are a top concern at the moment for transport operators and contractors, so the audience were particularly keen to hear from Dr Andrew Traill, presenting on the ways intelligent mobility can help lower emissions. Using his experience at Transport Systems Catapult to talk about the importance of collecting and measuring data to encourage innovation. If data can be integrated end to end, he suggested, traffic can be reduced, and so too emissions. He suggested a 'discover, query, mine' formula to capture the reliability and visibility that data provides. He used the example of ports and airports to demonstrate how freight could benefit from a connected system to stagger deliveries and arrivals around the shipments. Using statistics that recent analysis from integrating telematics and emissions datasets revealed, just 1% of Travel Time can be responsible for up to 18% of total emissions (average 12%). The audience could see quickly how their own operations could benefit from a more connected approach. "Data is like oil," Dr Traill said, "the real value comes from refining it."



Dr Andrew Traill, Principal Technologist, Transport Systems Catapult

A growing city region

The audience were particularly wowed by Dr Jon Lamonte, Chief Executive Officer, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), who was able to provide an insight into his plans for the area, and a specifier point of view on why FORS is so valued.

Although his responsibility lay in Manchester, he emphasised the importance of the connected North, with freight from Liverpool, Hull, Sheffield and Leeds often coming through Manchester; at present, 95% of goods are transported by road. With significant increases expected, keeping Greater Manchester moving continues to supply significant challenges.

A key part of this strategy is ensuring that cyclists and drivers are trained, improving the confidence of cyclists and the awareness of drivers of vulnerable road users. TfGM also runs Operator Collaboration workshops, to hear from logistics managers on what they think needs to be done to improve transport in the area.



Dr Jon Lamonte, CEO at Transport for Greater Manchester

Obstacles with urban freight operations



Dr Erica Ballantyne, Lecturer at University of Sheffield

Another speaker looking to improve freight operations is Dr Erica Ballantyne, whose research at The University of Sheffield, covers the importance of planning for urban freight operations, as well as potential solutions and initiatives for the industry. With much of local urban planning tending to focus on passenger based travel, Dr Ballantyne's research looks at meeting the needs of growing urban populations including the movement of goods.

She urged for greater collaboration between industry and local authorities, so that solutions could be found for traffic congestion, delivery restrictions, and accessibility for deliveries. She also highlighted how changing consumer behaviour has made it all the more important that current issues are addressed. Road freight continues to offer flexible, cheap and easily adaptable urban solutions for freight logistics but Dr Ballantyne also urged operators to consider the potential for modal shift to other alternative methods on a case by case basis.

Panels and surgeries

Those attending the conference had a chance to ask questions both during the panel sessions and during one on one surgeries with members of the FORS team. The surgeries brought out some interesting questions from delegates, including requirements such as ensuring every driver has a copy of the Highway Code and equipment requirements for those at Silver level.

The panel sessions welcomed questions from the crowd, on relevant topics including finer detail about the updated FORS Standard version 4.0 and new requirements at Bronze level for those being re-audited. There was lively debate around the subject of what FORS could do to better engage with cyclists, with John Hix acknowledging that all operators had a part to play in engaging vulnerable road users and that FORS, as a recognisable safety brand, will continue to research ways to involve this group in championing best practice.

Milestones

FORS also took the time to congratulate and award four milestones achieved in 2016. Lowery Ltd has become the 150th Gold member, James Lewis the 500th FORS Practitioner, Cargo Express the 4,000th FORS accredited member, and Neville Tilley Transport the 500th Silver member. Long standing, loyal members of the scheme were also acknowledged, and the role they have played in developing and championing the scheme to this point, as well as the large number of Gold operators who were in attendance.

Journey to success

Steve Agg closed the conference by acknowledging that fleet operations are crucial for keeping the UK economy moving, and responsible for ensuring that vital goods are moved around the country. Those attending the conference had already made a tremendous commitment to safety, with even Bronze level FORS members going above and beyond current legislative requirements for safety. FORS drivers, working under the strict guidelines of the FORS accreditation including health and fitness checks, and driver training, are a source of pride for the FORS team, and play a critical role in keeping road users safe.

Thanking all those who attended the conference but also the FORS members who couldn't attend the day, Agg reiterated that the goal of FORS was to make a difference to society, saving lives through safety improvements.

The quality and range of speakers were perfectly matched to the FORS environment. As a first attempt to bring the FORS community together, it should be counted as a major success. With an integrated exhibition offering the latest products and services from FORS Associates available to members to meet the FORS Standard, it was the model of focused efficiency.



FORS Milestones 2016 - Cargo Express, Brogan Group, Neville Tilley Transport, Lowery Ltd and FORS Helpline representative

FORS Associates exhibition

In addition to hearing from the range of speakers, 25 exhibitors attended, and were on hand to demonstrate the latest equipment, and advise on application and legalities. We spoke to a handful. Headline sponsor, VisionTrack, showed how CCTV, 3G telematics, and real-time tracking can defend drivers and hauliers against fraudulent claims. Pictures are worth a million words, and with verifiable data to go with it, many claims seem to evaporate.

Licence checking needs constant attention, and it's more complicated than photocopying a piece of plastic and popping it in the file. Licence Bureau showed that a comprehensive approach needs to include driver audit, licence checking, grey fleet, driver training, and right to work validations.

CCTV suppliers were probably more in evidence than any other technology, and Penny Randall, marketing manager EMEA at SmartDrive, echoed the comments of many fellow exhibitors. She said, "This has been the perfect meeting place for FORS members to review the latest technology and services that relate directly to their continued accreditation - it has such a good focus."



If you were unable to attend, testimonials from the FORS Members' Conference can be found here:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmG0uPf2gSxZBwxCPULNJ3w>

Safety Efficiency Environment

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