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Welcome

They say time flies when you're having fun and, with that in mind, it's hard to believe that it was almost a year ago that the third FORS Members' Conference took place in Solihull.

Admittedly 'fun' might not be the most accurate description of the past 12 months for everyone, but it's certainly been a busy year for FORS. There's been the introduction of version 5 of the FORS Standard as well as a number of other initiatives such as the FORS Fleet Management System to help members improve the efficiency, compliance and safety within their operations.

The year has also seen continuing interest in FORS and a desire from operators to be a part of the accreditation scheme.

There has also been great interest from the bus, coach and van sectors of the industry – testament, in part, to the changes made to the FORS Standard.

The bonds have also been strengthened by moves such as the addition of coach operator

First Choice to the FORS Governance and Standards Advisory Group (GSAG).

As the Members' Conference returns to the National Conference Centre, the transport sector faces a number of challenges – some of which are sure to be easier to overcome than others. For FORS, having celebrated 10 years in existence last year, it's time to look ahead to a new decade. A decade that will bring new challenges, such as electric vehicles, clean air zones and a continuing focus on compliance and enforcement, to name just three. Starting as it means to go on, FORS has assembled an impressive line-up of speakers for the conference, who will cover topics from tachographs to mental health and from compliance to tyre management. I hope to see you there.

Enjoy the issue.



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About us

Management

Publisher:

Matthew Eisenegger

Editorial

Art Editor: Trevor Gehlcken

Telephone: 01257 231521

Email: design@cvdriver.com

Contributors

John Challen

Steve Banner

Richard Simpson

Kevin Swallow

Editorial Address:

Commercial Vehicle Media & Publishing Ltd,

4th Floor 19 Capesthorne

Drive, Eaves Green, Chorley,

Lancashire. PR7 3QQ

Telephone: 01257 231521

Email: matthew@cvdriver.com

Advertising

Advertising Sales: David Johns

Telephone: 01388 517906

Mobile: 07590 547343

Email: sales@thestandardmagazine.co.uk

Printing

MRC Print Consultancy Ltd

33 Uttoxeter Road, Longton,

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Tel: 07764 951927

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Go green with help from FORS

With tough government targets on air quality now the responsibility of local authority bodies – and Clean Air Zones in place in major UK cities – environmental efficiency is now even more important for fleets operating in urban areas.

For commercial vehicle operators of all types seeking to secure contracts that stipulate proof of environmentally-efficient operating standards, FORS is seen as a key enabler. With a fleet's environmental impact encompassing far more than just emissions, there is a lot that can be done to make road transport smarter and greener.

Paul Wilkes, Business Services Manager at FORS, explored how FORS helps its diverse membership base of trucks, vans, cars, passenger carrying vehicles and powered two-wheelers, achieve environmental best practice.

Through this research, he has outlined a number of areas where operators can improve.

"Recording data is key for operators to baseline performance and identify where efficiency improvements can be made across a fleet," said Wilkes.

"FORS members can use the free FORS Fleet Tools data management portal to collate and record all fleet data to measure fuel consumption,



emissions, and fleet incidents and therefore understand where efficiencies can be made.

This data allows members to track their progress towards quantifiable efficiency gains and make changes to their operation to achieve results."

Members can upgrade from the free FORS Fleet Tools to the FORS Fleet Management System (FORS FMS).

Wilkes said it is essential that a fleet is in peak condition for the operation to be environmentally sound. "FORS FMS can be used to track fuel purchases, tyre tread and depth information and mileage figures," he advised. "This data is then used to ensure fleets have an accurate service, maintenance and repair schedule in place to fix faults early, keep costs down and

make sure vehicles are running as efficiently as possible."

Any fleet that operates in urban areas, facing considerable traffic and stop-start congestion, needs to understand how to drive as efficiently as possible, added Wilkes. To help commercial vehicle drivers understand the most efficient way to drive in cities and urban areas, he recommended LoCITY Driving courses.

More attention, suggested Wilkes, should be paid by operators regarding tyres, fuel consumption and future proofing fleets.

"While it is understood that more modern Euro 6 vehicles help operators achieve lower levels of fuel consumption and emissions, it is also a huge cost outlay," he said. "This is against

a backdrop of ever-changing emissions legislation."

Finally, Wilkes said there is a need to always push for more. "FORS' progressive model means members are always seeking to do more to reduce emissions, fuel consumption and lessen environmental impact, as they move from entry level Bronze up to Silver and Gold," he explained.

"Based on data submitted from 138 Gold case studies in 2018, FORS members have considerable success in reducing emissions, with members reporting a remarkable 14 per cent improvement in mpg performance."

● For more information about FORS FMS, go to: www.fors-online.org.uk/cms/fms/

FORS Silver seen as 'the new benchmark' in Waltham Forest

More and more local planning authorities are grasping the opportunity to influence the standard of goods and services activities through their development plans. Many authorities achieve this goal through hard measures such as Clean Air Zones (CAZ), safety permits and traffic restrictions, while others motivate the change using planning conditions.

The latest local authority to set out its

planning policy framework is Waltham Forest Council. With a target for 27,000 new homes and one of London's three 'Mini Holland' boroughs, Waltham Forest is improving its streets to promote more walking and cycling, while undergoing major construction development challenges.

The council has recently launched its 'Draft Local Plan' for consultation,

which proposes a series of measures to mitigate the adverse impacts of goods and servicing activity. One of the measures is the FORS Silver standard and it features twice in the council document. Whether operators are working on the construction phase of a development, or supplying goods and services when the building is operational, FORS Silver is soon to be the new benchmark for Waltham Forest.

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News

'Going for Bronze' interactive webinar launched

In a bid to help operators gain and maintain Bronze accreditation, FORS has introduced a new live webinar called Going for Bronze. The webinar allows delegates to participate from anywhere in the country. It has been introduced to make life easier for new members preparing for their first FORS audit and for existing members renewing their Bronze accreditation.

The online sessions will help FORS members wishing to minimise their environmental impact – removing the need for delegates to travel – therefore reducing CO2 emissions while saving time and money.

Lasting one hour, the webinars are aimed at transport managers and operational staff preparing for their Bronze audit, the first stage of the FORS accreditation process. During the session, delegates will be talked through the whole accreditation process – everything from booking an audit through to undertaking the audit itself is covered. In addition,

guidance about some of the key requirements set out in the FORS Standard, which must be met in order to pass the Bronze audit, will be provided.

"The webinar is a great addition to the online FORS Bronze audit toolkit and will be of great value to new members preparing for their first audit," said Sonia Hayward, FORS Manager. "We hope that the flexibility of a webinar means members will sign up to maximise their chances of getting their audit right first time. The sessions will highlight what evidence the auditors will be looking for and what to expect on the day, as well as help members make the most of the FORS benefits, such as online templates, guides, toolkits and toolbox talks."

The Going for Bronze webinar is part of a new series of interactive sessions from FORS. At the time of going to press, FORS has launched Going for Silver and Gold webinars, to support members as they progress through FORS accreditation levels.

Visit: <https://www.fors-online.org.uk/cms/going-for-bronze-webinar/>



A question of compliance ahead of DVS deadline

From 26 October 2020, HGVs with a gross vehicle weight of more than 12 tonnes will require a Direct Vision Standard (DVS) safety permit to enter or operate in Greater London. Despite that deadline being more than a year away, managers of fleets that are operating in and around the capital are being asked if they are ready.

The DVS was developed to improve driver visibility and reduce the risk of close-proximity blindspot collisions as part of the Vision Zero initiative. DVS ratings give HGVs between zero and five stars, based on a driver's direct vision through their windows.

A minimum of one star is required for a permit until 2024, at which point it will increase to three stars. However, HGVs should aim to have as many stars as possible, as soon as

possible, to maximise road safety.

Drivers in zero-star vehicles can't see a road user less than 4.5m away from the cab side. To be granted a permit, these vehicles must be fitted with a 'Safe System'. To help operators meet the requirements and become FORS-compliant, one option is to use the new VUEconnected range from VUE Group. This technology will now help zero-star vehicles satisfy the 'Safe System', including: robust HD side cameras and in-cab monitors that improve driver visibility; VUEscan proximity sensors with driver alarms and cameras and left-turn alarms announcing when a vehicle is turning left.

VUE Group is also promising that products in the range can be adapted to provide additional safety equipment for different levels of compliance.

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Devon councils collaborate over fleet

For the first time, Mid-Devon District Council (MDDC) and Exeter City Council (ECC) have joined together to source their vehicle fleets. Following a comprehensive tender process, both councils opted to award the seven-year contract (with a possible seven-year extension) for the provision and maintenance of approximately 210 vehicles. The deal was agreed with contract hire and fleet management company, Specialist Fleet Services Ltd (SFS).

"Previously we purchased our vehicles outright and outsourced the maintenance from a number of suppliers. The contract with SFS is not only better value for money but much simpler," said Stuart Noyce, Group Manager, Street Scene and Open



Spaces, Mid-Devon District Council. "We have a fixed price with no unexpected costs

(Left to right) Cllr Bob Deed, Leader, Mid Devon District Council; Stuart Noyce, Group Manager Street Scene and Open Spaces, Mid Devon District Council; Bob Sweetland Managing Director, SFS; Paul Connor, Head of Tenders and Procurement, SFS; Simon Hill, Service Manager – Recycling, Waste and Fleet, Exeter City Council

– which is much better for budgeting – and one point of contact for maintenance. There are many additional advantages as a result of this increased harmonisation with Exeter City Council, such as the ability to share equipment, carry out joint training and use each other's depots to park vehicles."

Simon Hill, Service Lead for Fleet, Exeter City Council, added: "We compared the costs of contract hire alongside our existing method of fleet procurement. The results showed that by contract-hiring the vehicles, we will make a saving and also speed up the replacement of older parts of the fleet with newer, lower-emission vehicles."

The contract for Mid-Devon District Council began on 3 June 2019, while the contract for Exeter City Council started on 1 July 2019. SFS will be providing a range of vehicles, including refuse collection vehicles, recycling vehicles, sweepers, hook loaders, tippers, vans, cars, telehandlers and grounds maintenance equipment.

The new fleet will include a number of electric vans and cars and the refuse vehicles will be fitted with the latest safety features.

"We are thrilled to have been selected as vehicle partner by both authorities and we look forward to delivering and maintaining an efficient, cost-effective fleet," said Bob Sweetland, Managing Director at SFS.

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Strict and ever increasing emission legislation, noise regulations and narrow delivery time slots are always a challenge to vehicle operators but are no match for the EMOSS electric vehicles. High residual value Euro 5 vehicles affected by Clean Air Zones (CAZ's) in the UK could be repowered to full, or range extended electric drivetrains, please consult Astra for more information.

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Harrow fleet to benefit from new technology

The London Borough of Harrow has upgraded the camera systems on more than 100 of its waste, recycling and cleansing vehicles.

The investment has been made in a bid to improve the safety of the borough's fleet as well as reduce false insurance claims. The council has chosen to switch to the RX3 360° camera system from Innovative Safety Systems, which first installed hard disk recording camera systems to the council's fleet in 2009.



Time to upgrade

"We have been using the hard disk system for the past 10 years and we decided it was time to upgrade to the latest technology. With this system we don't have to manually collect the data – it is automatically

downloaded via WiFi as each vehicle returns to the depot," said Cllr Varsha Parmar, Harrow Council's Cabinet Member for the Environment.

The authority is self-insured via its in-house insurance department, which can also remotely access and interrogate

the recorded footage via its own back office systems. "The new camera system will help to protect our crew and members of the public by recording any incidents or accidents," continued Parmar.

"Also, it enables us to identify and capture evidence more

efficiently regarding potentially fraudulent insurance claims. In the short time that we have been using the new systems we have already successfully disputed a number of claims."

Training insight

The footage can also be used during driver competence training to provide insight and crew members are encouraged to report incidents, such as when they experience verbal abuse, as they are often captured by the cameras.

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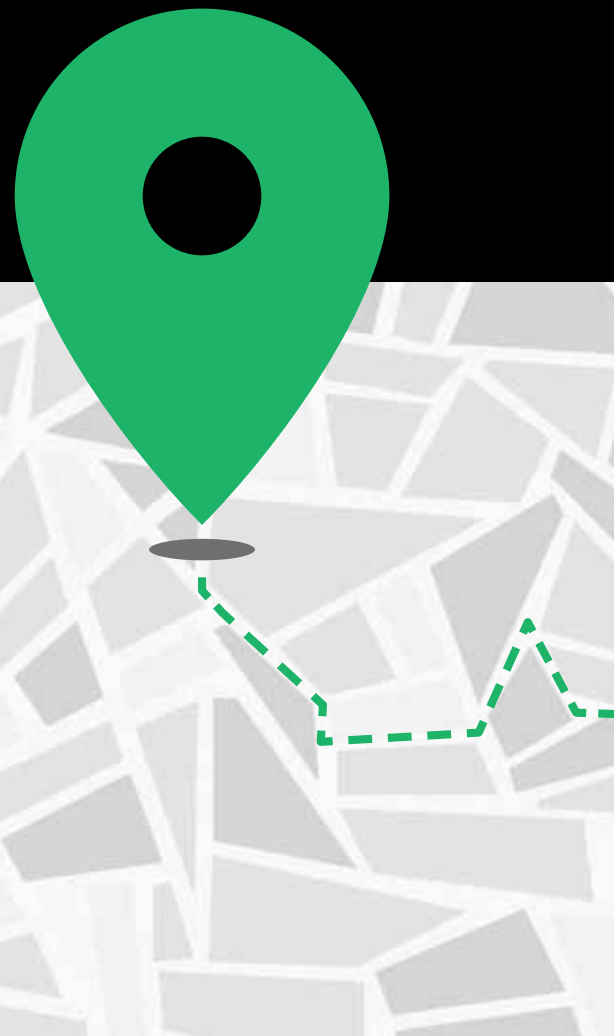
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News

Van safety and compliance under the spotlight

Overloading, driver fatigue and the latest FORS Standard were the headlining issues at a gathering of leaders in the light commercial vehicle fleet management industry.

The first Van Fleet Forum took place in July and featured presentations by RAC and TGS, as well as an industry update from Graham Holder, Associate Director and Head of Quality Assurance and Compliance at FORS. There was also a compelling talk about driver fatigue from Andrew Drewary, Road Safety and Collision Analyst Consultant at Road Safety Smart.

Guests included representatives from local authorities and the private sector – and the day was heralded as a great success. The event was hosted by VWS, at the company's factory in Chesterfield.



"I was delighted to be invited to speak at the first Van Fleet Forum about driver fatigue," said Drewary, who spoke at the FORS Members' Conference in 2018.

"More than 50 per cent of drivers admit to driving while feeling fatigued and 44 per cent of incidents are fatigue-related. "The event gave me and the

other speakers the opportunity to discuss safety issues that are often on the periphery of fleet operators' road risk policies. I think many of the delegates left thinking differently about how they tackle road risk within their organisations."

Kate Lloyd, Marketing Director at VWS, added: "The Van Fleet Forum brought



Overloading and driver fatigue were two topics of discussion at the first Van Fleet Forum

together van operators, leading industry suppliers and experts in the field of safety and compliance. Everyone who attended was able to take something away from the day.

"The feedback has been excellent and has paved the way for more events like this in the future. We are already planning a follow up in the South-West in October," she added.

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FORS Members' Conference 2019: Safer, Smarter, Greener

The FORS Members' Conference returns this autumn for its fourth year, with a packed schedule designed to show how FORS can help commercial vehicle operators become safer, smarter and greener

Returning to the National Conference Centre in Solihull, the fourth FORS Members' Conference takes place on Tuesday 15 October 2019. The event is free to attend for FORS members and will feature a whole host of speakers who are set to cover a wide range of essential industry topics.

There will also be the opportunity to engage with the presenters as well as exhibitors and fellow delegates at the daytime event. Now considered a key fixture in the road transport calendar, around 450 delegates are expected to be in attendance.

Help from all directions

The theme of the FORS Members' Conference this year is 'Safer, Smarter, Greener', designed to reflect the organisation's ongoing commitment to help its members reduce emissions and environmental impact of road transport as well as offering a route to reducing costs.

A series of panel discussions



and presentations from major industry stakeholders, including Highways England, Kier, Michelin and Rexel, will further examine these themes.

"FORS has now been active for more than 10 years and our success in driving up industry standards is reflected in the impressive number of leading industry figures who will be at this year's conference," said FORS Director, John Hix.

"FORS is committed to raising



John Hix, FORS Director

standards to help our industry become safer, smarter and greener and we look forward to exploring this with members at this year's event."

This year's host

The conference, whose headline sponsor will be Aquarius IT, will be hosted by Jo Godsmark, Chair of the CILT (Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport) Outsourcing and Procurement Forum

and Director of BigChange. Godsmark is also a trustee of international charity Transaid, which seeks to provide safe, sustainable and affordable transport to communities in need all over the world.

The event will be held in support of Transaid, with FORS matching each member's voluntary donation to a maximum of £10 per place booked.

More on offer

Alongside the conference will be an exhibition featuring FORS Associates and Affinity Partners.

Each of these exhibition stands will be showcasing products or services that are designed to help members meet the requirements of the FORS Standard and assist in improving industry best practice. As ever, delegates will be able to claim 3.5 Driver CPD hours for attending.

FORS Members' Conference 2019 key discussion topics (as at 26 Sept)

- FORS update – recent scheme developments - Paul Wilkes, FORS
- Home, safe and well – John Kerner, Highways England
- Drivers' mental health – Natalie Geraghty, Kier
- FORS compliance and enforcement – Graham Holder, FORS
- Technology and compliance – Ruth Waring, BigChange
- Tyre management: how to deflate your running costs – Edwin Farquhar, Michelin
- Smart tachographs: the future today – Adrian Barrett, RoadTech
- Driving safety when the supply chain never stops – Marc Holloway, Rexel
- FORS future: the next steps – John Hix, FORS

For more information on the FORS Members' Conference, go to:
<https://www.fors-online.org.uk/cms/fors-members-conference-2019/>

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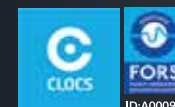
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Two-wheeled revival

It's never too late to get back into biking. **Richard Simpson** offers hints and tips and recommends some steeds to sample

For most young men growing up in the 1970s, motorcycling was a rite of passage. Even if it was just using a moped to get to work at the age of 16, or having a 250cc motorbike to tide them over until they could afford a car, there was a good chance that motorbikes would play a significant role in a teenager's life.

It's all very different now. Children tend to stay at school until they are 18 and are generally less interested in any form of motor vehicle than they have been at any time since the end of the First World War.

But there are still plenty of people around in middle age who have a hankering to either relive their lost youth on two wheels or try motorcycling for the first time, because it was previously forbidden by parents or prevented by family commitments.

Getting a licence is now far more complicated than it was back in the day, when all that was required was a pair of L-plates attached to your chosen mount before you wobbled off into the traffic. Then,



Photo: DVSA

there was an option of converting to a full licence by riding around the block outside the test centre under the watchful gaze of a man from the ministry.

Now, obtaining a full motorcycle licence is arguably a more complex and demanding process than acquiring a Category C licence to drive a truck.

Starting out on the road

The motorcycle (Cat A) licence is acquired in a process known as 'staged access', with various hurdles to negotiate along the way before a full-size, full-power motorcycle can be ridden on the road. There are a number of theory and practical tests to pass, each of which is in two parts. Just how many of the hurdles riders have to jump depends on their age and driving experience.

Before they are let out on the roads at all, they need to acquire a Certificate of Basic Training (CBT) from an approved training body (ATB) (www.gov.uk/motorcycle-cbt). The only exception to this rule is that people who hold a full car licence acquired before 1 February 2001 can ride a moped (restricted 50cc) without holding a CBT. A full car licence

normally includes a provisional Cat A licence, but be warned – this must be checked before riders go any further. CBT acquisition involves learning basic skills on the site and then riding on the road under supervision. Cost should be under £150, with motorcycles and clothing provided. Riders also need to demonstrate a basic knowledge of road law and the Highway Code.

Acquiring the CBT starts the clock ticking and riders now have two years in which to upgrade their Cat A licences. During that time they can ride unsupervised on the road on a 125cc machine with a maximum output of 14.8bhp (www.gov.uk/motorcycle-test).

Category clarification

Riders under 19 take a two-part theory and practical test, each of two modules, which will grant them an A1 licence and enable them to ride without L-plates and use motorways.

But the A1 category is still restricted to 'learner legal' 125cc machines as above.

Those aged over 19 can go straight to an A2

licence via the two-part test, entitling the rider to use a machine of up to 47hp and with a power-to-weight ratio not exceeding 0.26hp/kg. Once an A2 licence has been held for two years, a further two-part test can be taken, allowing the granting of a full Cat A licence, giving access to machines of unlimited power. Effectively, the minimum age for a full Cat A licence is thus 21.

Riders aged 24 or over can go straight to a full Cat A licence within two years of CBT. This again involves taking a two-part theory test, followed by a two-part practical test. These tests can be taken separately or together, but must be passed within two years of the theory test.

Back in the saddle

But what about people who acquired a full licence back in the day, but have not ridden a motorcycle for decades? In theory, they could go out and buy themselves any bike, jump on it and ride away. But it might not be the wisest decision.

There has been a quantum leap in motorcycle engine performance since the 1970s and one good example is that a 500cc four-stroke twin commuter bike nowadays is actually more powerful than the 'high performance' 650cc Triumph Bonneville of the 1960s and 1970s. Stability, brakes and handling are also much improved, thanks to advancing tyre design and the introduction of technologies such as ABS brakes.

So the sensible approach for any returning rider would be to buy an A2 Category machine (they are easy to sell again, should a change be desired) and undertake some post-test training.

There are any number of reasons for this extra learning. Perhaps the most important is that years of car driving will erode basic motorcycle roadcraft and survival skills. The classic is emergency braking – car drivers will just instinctively stamp on the brake pedal, which is not the best course to take on a motorcycle, where progressive use predominantly of the front brake is the safest course.

Various organisations including RoSPA and IAM Roadsmart (formerly the Institute of Advanced Motorcyclists) offer suitable courses and there is also an accredited DVSA Enhanced Rider Scheme set up to cater precisely for the needs of the returning rider. This is delivered by a network of commercial training providers. Some local police forces also offer BikeSafe training, which is delivered by off-duty police motorcyclists.

These courses cover a mixture of roadcraft and machine-handling skills. Participants usually find

“There are plenty of people around in middle age who have a hankering to either relive their lost youth on two wheels, or try motorcycling for the first time”

Motorcycle safety

the 'hyper-awareness' that comes naturally with motorcycling hones car and truck driving skills too.

Offroad experience

For those who really want to sharpen their skills, it's an idea to think about leaving the Tarmac behind and going on an off-road training day.

These are offered in a variety of mostly rural locations by providers who often have the backing of major players in the off-road motorcycle market. Try to avoid courses involving big adventure bikes weighing a quarter of a tonne apiece and go instead for those with lightweight enduro or trail motorcycles. Book an entry-level course to avoid utter humiliation.

In off-road training there is no 'mirror, signal, manoeuvre', but riding on a loose surface will teach riders how to deal with slides, wheel lock-ups and a whole variety of other situations that can lead to disaster on the road.

In an off-road environment, they are all part of the fun. But while participants are grinning from ear



to ear as they slide around the corners, or smiling ruefully as they pick themselves and the bike up out of the dirt, they are embedding the reflexes that can save them from a fall or worse on the road.

Even the world's greatest road racers spend much of their off-season seemingly messing about on low-powered dirt bikes. Why? Because the skillset needed to balance a 125cc dirt bike in a feet-up powerslide through sand at 20mph is exactly what is required to do the same on Tarmac with 1,000cc 240hp Moto GP race bikes at 120mph.

Choose your machine

Richard Simpson has been riding motorcycles since 1976 and, before turning to road transport, worked in the motorcycle trade and on leading motorcycling publications. Here are four bikes he's picked for beginners and returners

Learner/A1 licence: Yamaha YS125: £2,899

Built on the platform of the global best-seller YBR125, the cute little Yam has a simple air-cooled two-valve four-stroke motor, enhanced with modern fuel-injection. It will return up to 30 miles per litre of petrol, weighs just 129kg and has a novice-friendly upright riding position.



A2 licence: KTM Duke 390 £4,749

For those seeking fun, the little KTM delivers it in spades. Unusually, it combines sporty handling with an upright riding position and has a feisty 44hp four-stroke single-cylinder engine. It's not a good choice for two-up touring, but even an experienced rider will be grinning after a ride on a Duke 390.



A2 licence: Royal Enfield 650 Interceptor £5,500

Enfield closed its UK factory in 1970, but production carried on in India. The all-new 650 Interceptor offers all the joys of a big British twin but not the vibration. If the KTM is a Jack Russell, then the Enfield is a Labrador. It's big enough to tackle long journeys and carry a passenger – and there's a three-year warranty.



A2 licence: Beta Alp 4.0 £4,895

Beta is a long-established Italian manufacturer of off-road competition bikes, but the 350cc Alp trail bike is no racer. It combines the engine from Suzuki's much-missed DR350S trail bike with a lightweight chassis capable of tackling almost any terrain at civilised speed, while still being comfortable and economical on the road.



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Saving time and money

A recent fuel card scheme set up by FORS and Fuel Card Services brought major savings to BML Utility Contractors and streamlined its auditing process, says its Transport and Compliance Director **Steve Hobbs**

To understand how a commercial vehicle fleet is working, it is important to bring all the third party information together into a single coherent report. What makes this task difficult is having mileage and fuel card expenditure supplied by separate businesses. It requires time, patience and an eye for detail to marry up information presented in disparate formats and to spot anomalies and errors.

That was the challenge faced by Steve Hobbs, Transport and Compliance Director at telecommunications company BML Utility Contractors. Hobbs is also responsible for the vehicles and drivers working for BML's subsidiary First Call Traffic Management.

Both BML and First Call are FORS Bronze-accredited companies. Throughout his seven-plus years at BML in transport management, Hobbs has

used a fuel card from a major supplier. "If I needed a miles per gallon report for our FORS audit I would have to download the entire report and then spend time creating a bespoke report by linking it up with the mileage," he explains.

Vehicles were also fitted with a separate – and rudimentary – tracking system that told him where his vehicles were located. Efforts to bring in a camera with a tracking system would have had to work alongside the existing vehicle tracking system which, Hobbs says, just simply 'wasn't worth the expenditure'.

A new direction

With the contract for the tracker winding down and the fuel cards up for renewal, Hobbs sought a viable alternative. He'd previously met Rachel Pearson, a Major Account Manager at Fuel Card Services (FCS), on several FORS Practitioner courses. A presentation about the new tie-up with FCS, a FORS Affinity Partner, to create a FORS Fuel Expert scheme piqued his interest.

Launched in 2019, FORS Fuel Expert was created to be used by any FORS operator regardless of fleet size or type of vehicles, offering up to 16 discounted fuel cards. The product is designed to provide fuel savings and a chance to reduce overall fuel consumption.

Robust reports

FORS Fuel Expert network covers more than 7,000 UK forecourts, including Shell, BP, Texaco and Esso. Hobbs says the inclusion of FORS Fuel Reporting means he can access robust fuel consumption and miles-per-gallon reports to help understand how to reduce the amount of fuel used, save more money and help the environment. "To start with it's been cheaper on fuel – we are saving up to £400 a month," he says.

Between BML and First Call, Hobbs is responsible for 15 trucks and 60 vans as well as 65 drivers. "The



Steve Hobbs, Transport and Compliance Director at telecommunications company BML Utility Contractors

“It's been cheaper on fuel – we are saving up to £400 a month”

FORS Bronze-accredited First Call is benefiting from the new scheme from FORS and Fuel Card Services

► trucks are traffic management impact protection vehicles with cushions on the back and the vans are low slung vehicles for putting out traffic cones," he explains.

The fuel cards work in tandem with a tracker system, so if fuel is drawn but the vehicle is not in that location, an alert will be issued. "What this system has done is stop any issues or suspicions we might have had about incorrect fuel usage," says Hobbs.

"The tracker gave us a better understanding of how the vehicle is being used; it alerts when there is excessive activity – such as harsh accelerating, braking and cornering.

"From that data, we are able to build up a weekly report on driver behaviour and establish a league table to incentivise the drivers towards best practice." Hobbs explains that the company has set up a leaderboard, with the best-performing drivers at

the end of the month receiving a voucher for a meal for two.

Making a difference

The scheme has also allowed Hobbs to fit forward-facing cameras to the vehicles. "That has made a difference for us from an insurance point of view and reducing our premiums. If there is an incident, I get an alert and the camera will record 15 seconds prior to the incident so it's on record," he explains.

"If I am in a meeting, I will also get a notification alerting me to an incident. It is fantastic to know FCS is monitoring it as well. It provides me with much-needed support and peace of mind."

Another benefit of FORS Fuel Expert has been a reduction in the amount of time it takes to compile reports. "You just print it off and check it and it's 'audit ready', which frees me up to get on with other tasks for the day," he says.



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Handle with care

Even though a trailer doesn't have an engine, it can still be dangerous.

Richard Simpson examines ways of making the unpowered fleet safer

BELOW: EN 12642-XL must apply to the entire body, not just the curtains, and is not a substitute for load restraint unless the load is a 'secure fit' to the front, sides and rear

Incidents and near misses involving coupling, loading and unloading semi-trailers are among the most under-reported in the transport industry. Ask any driver: "What is the first thing you would do if you accidentally dropped a trailer on its knees or had a tractor unit roll away?" and the honest answer would probably be: "Look around and check if anyone had seen it!"

Independent research by equipment manufacturer Maple indicates that two in every three commercial vehicle drivers have witnessed such an incident and 60 per cent of drivers said that 'best practice' in trailer coupling was not regularly adhered to at their work. Pressure of time and fatigue obviously have a part to play, especially as this irksome task is most frequently performed at the start or end of a shift.

Drivers are also sometimes – shockingly –



Palletised bags of cement can be slippery customers and prone to damage if ordinary straps are used. Don-Bur is one of the trailer manufacturers which offers a suspended sheet solution

discouraged or forbidden from performing routine tasks that would ensure safety. Until recently, some yards actually had signs commanding drivers not to set parking brakes on dropped trailers (to make life easier for the shunters) and we still hear of drivers who are told that "health and safety" means they cannot secure their loads properly on the premises. Instead, they must take their trucks, load unsecured, out onto the public highway and fit their straps there.

At the other end of the scale, it seems that DVSA and traffic police are now prioritising load security. Methods that once passed without comment or incident are now deemed inadequate and even loads that appear secure on external examination have been deemed not to be, once the curtains were pulled.

In particular, curtainsider pull-down roof straps are an industry standard, but actually can only typically take loads of 400kg a strap. With 26 straps, these curtainsiders can only secure a maximum load of 10.4 tonnes – and that's in the best-case scenario of each pallet or item maximising at 800kg.

Mixed loads

The situation becomes even more complex when different items are loaded. A pallet of bottled water won't withstand having straps pulled down on it for long and nor will an open 'dumpy bag' of sand. Trailer manufacturers offer versatile solutions, such as suspended nets or sheets, together with wider,

stronger straps, but they are reluctant to specify them as standard.

Manufacturer Don-Bur's Marketing Manager Richard Owens, who also sits on a Health and Safety Executive steering group on load security, explains why: "As standard spec, these systems might put manufacturers at a commercial disadvantage: they can cost £1,000 extra a trailer."

Given that, in the modern logistics business, the company specifying the trailers may well not operate the tractors that pull them and almost certainly won't directly employ the driver who takes front-line responsibility for the safety of the load – this is a major factor in a price-driven market.

The German experience

Things are different in Germany, where strict consignor liability means that most companies will not let a badly-loaded trailer out of the gate. Typically, a responsible person will photograph the completed load and sign it off as secure before dispatch.

Germany's TUV was behind the introduction of two standards for secure curtainsiders: EN 12642 2006-L and EN12642 2006-XL. This European standard sets out basic minimal requirements for front and rear walls in its L form, while the XL standard also covers walls, including curtainsiders. It is a myth that fitting XL-marked curtains will bring

an uncertified trailer up to standard: the front and rear structures are included too. In simple terms, the front must be able to withstand pressure equivalent to 0.5 of the load weight, the sides 0.4 and the rear 0.3.

Cargo requirements

All loads must be what is deemed a 'secure fit' i.e. snug to the front bulkhead with dunnage packing if necessary and with a restraint where there is a gap between the rear of the load and the back of the trailer. L-standard trailers will still require lateral restraint such as strapping, but this is not required on XL trailers providing the load on each side is within 80mm of the curtain. The relevant certificate must be carried on the trailer with the curtains marked as appropriate. So EN 12642 is not a one-stop solution to load restraint issues and drivers will need advice as to its adequacy in different situations (where diminishing loads are carried, for instance), Owens advises: "We offer equipment such as kites or rear transverse nets to help ensure compliance on our XL trailers."

German manufacturer Schmitz Cargobull offers side laths as an alternative to reinforced curtains but these are unpopular in the UK.

Schmitz's laths can be supplied with sockets for fridge-trailer style transverse beams to give secure longitudinal separation of individual items on the loadbed – ideal in situations where loaded

“60 per cent of drivers said that 'best practice' in trailer coupling was not regularly adhered to at their work”



Handle with care

► items must be dispersed to avoid axle overloads. Schmitz also offers pull-down sheet systems for delicate items.

Positioning the straps correctly to secure, but not damage, load items is an art in itself – particularly as many premises will not allow drivers to climb onto trailers. The Mouny Applicator is a simple device that enables straps and corner protectors to be safely positioned from ground level.

But there is no alternative to clambering onto trailers when it comes to loading and securing heavy items such as plant and equipment: lobbing a chain over a digger is a non-starter, as are conventional fall-restraint systems that are impractical on a low trailer with no roof.

Montracon has developed a plant trailer safety system that is being used by FORS member A-Plant, which allows platforms to be accessed safely. It includes pull-out walkways around the trailer edge, a detachable 'post-and rail' edge protector with straps forming the rails and step-on access to the front of the trailer from the tractor's catwalk.

"Montracon offers similar systems for standard flat trailers, too. The great advantage is they are fully-portable and are carried on the trailer, meaning the operator can ensure the safety of his driver at all locations," explains the company's Marketing Manager, Dean Ridgill.



RIGHT: internal nets can be used to provide lateral restraint

Back to those embarrassing coupling/dropping incidents. Don-Bur has a system, Leg-Safe, which will warn the driver not to drop a trailer if the landing legs have not been sufficiently lowered.

It also has a system that will warn the driver if the EBS line has not been properly connected. EBS-Safe sounds a warning if the relevant line is not connected from tractor to trailer. Without the line, the trailer's anti-lock braking systems will not be connected and the load sensing system will not



ABOVE: the German way – this Schmitz Cargobull trailer features toe boards, side laths and pull-down sheets

A-Plant's Montracon plant carrier, with fall protection railing deployed



are picked up or dropped. Every driver should know to ensure that the tractor's parking brake is applied during the process, but there are still cases every year where the rig starts moving once the red line is connected. Maple's SafeConnect is a valve that prevents air flowing down the red line and releasing the trailer brake until the driver has returned to the cab and applied the truck's service brake. The driver doesn't need to do anything different to couple the trailer. For those operators with high-value trailers or loads, the system can also be equipped to keep the trailer brake locked.

There are clearly a number of straightforward measures that can be taken to ensure that trailer best practice is adopted which will help prevent unwanted incidents down the line.

With the need for greater efficiency and reduced downtime, it makes sense for operators to take advantage of these solutions – many of which will be well worth the investment.



ABOVE: a 'kite' can be used to restrain loads that do not reach the back of the trailer

work, leading to a dangerous reduction in brake performance. Furthermore, the stability and ride height controls will not be activated, making roll-overs and bridge strikes more likely.

Rollaways remain a hazard in yards where trailers

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Michelin's sure-fire solution to good tyre management

The importance of looking after your tyres should never be underestimated. It is imperative for maximising road safety, plus can improve fleet performance, reduce running costs and increase uptime. Naturally, it's a subject tyre giant Michelin is passionate about.



Andrew French

We spoke to Andrew French, Michelin's Director of Services and Solutions for the UK, Ireland and Nordics, to discuss the techniques the company uses to manage the tyres on more than 900,000 commercial vehicles around the world.

How much emphasis does Michelin put on ensuring its customers have a professional tyre management policy in place?

As a brand, we are known around the world for providing the highest quality tyres in the marketplace and we want all our customers to maintain our products in the best shape for as long as possible.

We can't stress enough how vital it is to monitor tyre pressures, making sure they are at the correct level for each individual axle, ensuring there is always sufficient tread remaining and there is no damage on the tyres. These are just the basic levels of standards we actively encourage, and help, our customers to adhere to. But through our Services and Solutions Business Line, we have now expanded our techniques far beyond traditional tyre management contracts.

Can you give us a brief overview of what Michelin's Services and Solutions Business Line is all about?

While clearly the tyre itself remains the fulcrum of our business, the Services and Solutions Business Line is a huge part of the company today – with a global

workforce of around 1,000 people. Put simply, our job is to design, develop and deploy mobility solutions to ensure our customers get the absolute maximum performance from their tyres – helping each individual business to improve their efficiency, productivity, compliance and environmental footprint along the way. Our aim is to offer a full sustainable mobility package, meeting all of the customer's needs and mitigating any pain points.

Talk us through some of the ways Michelin is helping fleets to keep their tyres running in perfect order.

Regular fleet inspections, servicing and rapid response roadside support are all provided by our 'ServicePro' dealer network – made up exclusively of tyre dealers which have met Michelin's quality and technical standards. This sees each location put through rigorous audits, measuring the quality of service, workshop and premises; adherence to health & safety and standards of customer care. We have around 200 of these facilities around the UK, so no matter where your business is based there will be a number of choices available to look after your fleet.

All the information and data gathered by our service providers is inputted into our contract management system. In many respects, this is the heartbeat of the offer. It's an internet-based tool that feeds directly into our purpose-built reporting system, allowing us to keep a close eye on the service provided to our customers, helping us to ensure the legality of the product and maintaining compliance with appropriate regulations.

Then we have our commercial and operational teams. Providing a hands-on, personal approach is so important for Michelin. This team makes regular customer visits, offering advice on the correct tyre pressures and set-up,

and gathering feedback from each individual business. We are constantly looking for ways to improve results and outcomes for all customers. By having the data in our contract management systems, we can provide our customers with quality KPI that drive the right behaviours within their business.

We've seen a lot of new products from Michelin in recent times, and not all have been tyres. What stands out most for you?

Innovation and technology have been the bedrock of the business for more than 100 years and will always remain so. We pride ourselves on designing and developing new solutions to stay ahead of the game.

Our Effitrailer telematics programme has been hugely successful and is continually being upgraded, allowing it to evolve with the needs of the customer. The system can now provide precise tyre pressure data, geolocation, fridge temperatures, data from the braking system and even lets the customer know if a trailer door comes open. In our experience, customers taking on our Effitrailer product see a significant reduction in tyre-related trailer breakdowns – regardless of their tyre policy.

We've also seen huge interest in our Michelin Wheel Safe system this year. The product is the world's first in-motion driver-alert system that detects the onset of wheel loss before it happens. If a wheel nut starts to loosen by just 1mm, a signal is instantly sent to the driver, allowing the vehicle to pull over before the wheel comes off – plus if connected to the vehicle's telematics system, a notification can be sent to the traffic office too. The product also comes with a full tyre pressure management system (TPMS) and measures the temperature of the brakes, as well as many other features. It's something we're very excited about.

It has become something of a buzzword in recent times, but many fleets are being challenged by their customers to improve sustainability. Is this an area where Michelin can help?

Absolutely. Sustainability is hugely important to Michelin. We pride ourselves on being one of the world's most innovative, responsible and high-performance companies. We design tyres that require fewer raw materials, consume less energy and offer long lasting performance.

By maximising the life of every tyre we produce – through professional management and next-generation solutions – we only strengthen the position for fleets. We are determined to remain a world-leader in tyre technology and for sustainable mobility of every form.

Edwin Farquhar, Key Account Manager, Services & Solutions Business Line, will be talking at the FORS Members' Conference 2019 at the National Conference Centre in Birmingham on Tuesday, 15 October

For more information visit:

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Michelin's Effitrailer solution includes a TPMS which helps to protect against roadside breakdowns

Where there's a wheel there's a way...

...for it to fall off! **Richard Simpson**
examines the tricky area of wheel
security >>>>

Correct torquing and
retorquing are an
essential part of the
wheel security process



Wheelnut flags provide a valuable warning if a nut is on the move

When it comes to heavy vehicle wheels, there is no such thing as 'fit and forget'. The DVSA says that daily checks on wheel security are a legal requirement and vehicle manufacturers do not dispute this.

Research carried out in 1986 by the Institute of Road Transport Engineers among its members indicated that a wheel stud failure rate of three per cent per year was normal and the average distance covered between failures was 123,000 km. And these figures were not generated from the truck, bus and coach vehicle parc as a whole, but from fleets run by IRTE members, which were likely to be better maintained than average. Equally alarmingly, the failures were not in any predictable pattern and more than six per cent of wheel hubs were likely to be affected each year.

While by no means all wheel loss incidents are reported, Department for Transport figures recorded 323 instances of wheel loss between 1982 and 1994. The actual total of incidents is estimated as being as high as 3,000 a year, with up to 10 fatalities.

Over 70 per cent of losses were attributed to failures or abuses in fitting or maintenance. Issues included a failure to tighten fasteners up to the correct torque, damage caused by over-tightening of fasteners and failures to regularly check wheelnuts.

There's a mistaken belief that losses occur when fasteners start to work loose. In fact, loose fasteners are usually a symptom of the underlying problem and often not the cause.

Truck wheels are located by the central spigot on the hub and the fasteners play a key role in maintaining the pressure required. A single stud tightened to 600Nm produces between 19 and 24 tonnes of clamping force. However, this force is much reduced if the tension of individual studs is reduced.

A wheel may be a snug fit on the hub when first torqued up, but if the interface between the wheel and the hub is corrupted with dirt, rust or paint, then the contamination will fret away under load, loosening the hub wheel interface and increasing the load on the studs until either they start stretching, fracturing or coming undone.

Removal every two years

Tyre maker Continental suggests that all truck wheels are removed and inspected for corrosion, damage and signs of pitting at least every two years.

Goodyear's Truckforce tyre service regularly changes wheels at operators' premises and at the roadside in the event of a tyre breakdown.

Its technicians are trained to clean and inspect studs, nuts, wheels and hubs as a first defence against wheel loss. Only when they have established that all are in fully-serviceable condition is the wheel replaced on the vehicle and torqued up. Dirty or damaged threads will give a reduced clamping force and Truckforce technicians lightly lubricate each stud with thin oil prior to fitment to reduce stiction.

ATS Tructyre details its wheel fastening policy – 30 minutes after initial fitment and setting, the fasteners should be retorqued, irrespective of whether the



FORS member Hanson Cement uses the Wheel-Safe system on its new tanker fleet

vehicle has moved or not. Then the process should be repeated after the vehicle has been driven for 20 to 50 miles. Many operators also undertake a third check after 24 hours.

The torque figure used should be the one specified by the manufacturer, or to BS AU 50 Part 2 Section 7a 1995 (600Nm).

The fasteners need to be tightened sequentially, working across the wheel, initially with the wheel elevated and subsequently on the ground.

Retorquing should also be a part of every Statutory Maintenance Inspection, with any issues recorded and acted upon to prevent recurrence.

In between PMIs, drivers are on the frontline of wheel-loss prevention. DVSA requires only a

'visual check' of wheelnuts, but an experienced eye will spot tell-tale signs such as a bright metal ring around the offending nut, or a trail of powdered rust heading radially outward from the fastener. DVSA itself gives each nut a tap with a light hammer – any variation in the note struck can indicate a problem.

Wheel types differ

Continental warns that some wheel types are more problematic than others. It finds 70 per cent of detachment issues come from twin-wheel trailer fitments and suggests replacing these with super-singles. The more mating faces there are, as with twin wheels, the greater the area for contamination. Undersize wheels, such as 17.5s, are more problematic than their full-size counterparts, as they are more highly stressed.

Wheelnut indicator flags, as invented by Checkpoint, give a visual warning if a fastener has rotated since fitment. The company has since expanded its product range to include retainers that prevent nuts from rotating, as well as spin-on tools to check that threads are still free-running.

Bringing wheel security into the digital age, the Wheel-Safe system, licensed by Michelin, incorporates a set of valve-mounted tyre pressure monitors with additional sensors mounted to wheelnuts that can detect movements in the fasteners of just 1mm and will also trigger alerts if hub temperatures exceed 100°C.

The system will automatically 'pair' tractors and trailers and indicates problems as soon as they present themselves. Other solutions such as wheelnut position indicators can only be checked when the vehicle is parked.

Cement manufacturer Hanson is rolling the system out in its 180-strong fleet, with 59 new DAF tractor units and 40 new Feldbinder tanker trailers initially being fitted.



Loose wheels cost lives

“Loose fasteners are usually a symptom of the underlying problem, and often not the cause”



LEFT: nuts must be free-running on threads if a false torque is to be avoided

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GOING FURTHER™

Zero emissions for charity group

Compaid has taken on the UK's very first fully electric-powered Renault Trucks minibuses. **Steve Banner** reports

All fleets need to minimise their impact on the environment – and that includes those run by charities. That is why Kent-based independent charity Compaid has put a zero-emission electric Master Z.E. L2H2 minibuses sourced through Renault Trucks into service on a year's trial.

The vehicle was the first battery-powered Master the manufacturer has supplied to a British customer and was converted into a wheelchair-accessible passenger carrier by Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire-based Renault Trucks-approved converter Minibus Options.

The newcomer is being used to transport vulnerable people and people with disabilities from Tunbridge Wells and the surrounding area to Compaid's training centre at its Paddock Wood headquarters in order to learn computer skills.

"Eighty individuals are being trained there at present," says Compaid Chief Executive Officer, Stephen Elsdon. "Around 350 people make use of our training services every year."

Founded in 1986, Compaid has close links with Kent County Council (KCC). It delivers a number of different services on its behalf, including its involvement in the Kent Karrier programme. It is a fully-accessible dial-a-ride service that takes people with disabilities and senior citizens directly from their door to the nearest town centre.

Postponement leads to opportunity

KCC had originally planned to deploy the Master Z.E. itself on a demand-responsive community transport scheme it was proposing to set up. However, it decided to postpone the scheme's introduction and asked Elsdon if Compaid might be interested in making use of the vehicle instead.

"I said 'yes' immediately," he recalls. "To be honest, I couldn't believe my luck."

A charging point has been set up at Paddock Wood. The Renault is plugged into it overnight and in the middle of the day to top up the battery pack when it returns to the yard.

"We're using the Master Z.E. for short local runs at present," says Elsdon. "However, it can be used on



trips to the coast – which is not too far away – and on rural journeys. The longest journey it does is a 60- to 70-mile round trip but most of its round trips are closer to 40 to 50 miles," he says.

"On average, our minibuses cover 20,000 miles apiece per year, but we would expect the Master Z.E. to cover more like 10,000 to 15,000 miles," he adds.

Benefits of silent running

Along with zero tailpipe emissions, Master Z.E.'s silent running electric motor brings further environmental benefits, says Elsdon.

"We pick up and drop off in residential areas, so reducing noise pollution in local streets is important," he observes. "Furthermore, the low noise level is equally valued by Master Z.E.'s passengers, who see the journey as an integral part of their experience, giving them an opportunity to chat with friends."

"A quiet vehicle is a real asset if you're having a conversation because you're not trying to talk over the noise of an engine," he adds. "It's a real plus point if you happen to be hard of hearing. The Renault offers a very decent ride too."

Grahame Neagus, Head of LCVs at Renault Trucks, says: "Renault Trucks' Master Z.E. range, launched in 2019, has already proved a success and with just 2020 around the corner, the range is set to grow further with the introduction of the chassis-cab derivative and increased payload versions in the all-new Red Edition model. The new Red Edition range covers all engine and model derivatives including the Z.E. and comes with a whole host of uprated in-cab enhancements for both the driver and operational efficiencies, including a class-leading total cost of ownership position."

"The Renault Trucks Z.E. Master is just one of the Z.E. electric family which now goes up to 26-tonne 6x2 rigid – a truly complete electric vehicle range for the discerning professional operator," he adds.

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Fit for purpose

With the spotlight now more prominently on mental health in the workplace, employees are encouraged to speak out and take advantage of the help available to them. **By Steve Banner**

Mental health problems are the leading cause of workplace absenteeism in the UK, accounting for around 70 million lost working days and costing the country £35bn a year. These were the findings of a white paper published by independent fleet management specialist Venson Automotive Solutions entitled: *'It's good to talk: caring about mental health'*.

The fact that a fleet management company more usually associated with activities such as vehicle acquisition has put in the time, trouble and effort required to produce such a document highlights the growing focus on employee mental health in the transport industry.

"Managing the vehicle, driver and journey are the main areas employers need to focus on when it comes to driver safety, but all too often mental health is overlooked," says Venson's Director of Client Management, Simon Staton. "The white paper outlines the challenges facing businesses and asks them to question if their drivers are sufficiently fit and healthy to drive safely and not put themselves and others at risk."

Banish the stigma

The white paper's title itself underlines an ongoing problem. Although there is thankfully greater openness than there was even five years ago, there is a stigma that is still all too often associated with mental health issues. This stigma means that many

employees remain reluctant to talk about them with their colleagues, never mind their line managers.

That situation is especially the case in male-dominated sectors of employment such as van driving. This point was underscored by Mercedes-Benz Vans in its *'Business Barometer'* – regular research it conducts into the views of van owners and drivers.

Last year, the researchers it uses asked over 2,000 owners and drivers to give their views on – and discuss their experiences of – mental health issues in the workplace. In response, 56 per cent said there was still a stigma attached to discussing this type of health problem at work.

Hurdles to overcome

The researchers also found that 50 per cent of those questioned believed the stigma still existed because transport is still predominantly a man's world, while a further 46 per cent highlighted fears over job security and career progression that made talking about mental health in the workplace taboo.

Some 28 per cent of managers said an employee had spoken to them about mental health worries. Female managers are more likely than their male

counterparts to have a worker raise such concerns with them (32 per cent as opposed to 26 per cent).

Unfortunately, managers and fellow workers may feel ill-equipped to cope with such issues if they are raised.

Fifty-seven per cent of those who say a colleague

LEFT: Ford has been busy with its 'Elephant in the Transit' mental health campaign in co-operation with dirty van artist Ruddy Muddy

or employee has spoken to them about mental health worries felt 'glad they could confide in me'. However, 21 per cent said they felt embarrassed and a further 17 per cent admitted that they did not know what to do or say.

Professional drivers are at particular risk of suffering with their mental health because of the stress-filled working lives they lead, says Richard Owen-Hughes, Group Marketing Director at transport industry recruitment specialist Driver Hire. "They work in an unpredictable environment and often on their own, where traffic conditions, the weather and tight delivery deadlines can all contribute to stress and fatigue," he points out. "It can also be hard to get enough exercise and to eat healthily."

Manufacturer message

The most recent Mercedes-Benz Vans *Business Barometer* survey of 2,000-plus van drivers and owners returned to the topic of mental health. It revealed that unrelenting workplace pressure – Mercedes-Benz refers to it as the 'always on' culture – was leading to 24 per cent of people suffering from anxiety, 23 per cent from stress and 21 per cent from depression.

No fewer than 16 per cent of respondents said that they were alert to work pressures 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The consequences of anxiety, stress and depression can be catastrophic for the individuals concerned. ▶

The latest Mercedes-Benz Business Barometer report states that exercise can help avoid stress, anxiety and depression



The Venson white paper cites some chilling recent figures from the Office for National Statistics. They reveal that a man aged between 20 and 49 is more likely to die from suicide than cancer, heart disease or a road crash. Furthermore, suicide rates in men aged between 45 and 59 have now begun to rise, increasing to their highest levels since 1981.

The business response

Ford has forged links with Time to Change – which campaigns against stigmatising mental health – and it has also signed the ‘Time to Change Employer pledge’. Almost 200 of Ford’s UK employees have attended mental health first-aid courses so that they are better able to help colleagues who may be struggling. A further 50 are scheduled to attend courses this year.

The manufacturer has also been busy with its ‘Elephant in the Transit’ mental health campaign in co-operation with dirty van artist Ruddy Muddy. The campaign arose after Ford research identified that 67 per cent of people said they were more comfortable talking about issues when in a vehicle.

“We need to create a culture in which anyone experiencing problems can ask for help in the knowledge that they will be supported,” says the Mental Health Foundation.

The role of the employer

Employers may also have to reconsider their operating practices and the demands they place on drivers. “They should have a duty of care policy to ensure work does not harm an individual’s physical or mental health,” says the Venson white paper.

“Driving schedules should be planned so that they do not require staff to drive too far, too long or too fast, or without adequate rest breaks,” says the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. There is, of course, a clear legal obligation for employers to do so if the business concerned is the holder of an Operator’s Licence and is obliged to ensure compliance with the Drivers’ Hours regulations.

The Venson paper points out that drivers suffering from stress are 50 per cent more likely to drive dangerously. “In the event of an incident involving an employee driving on business, individual directors/managers and the company could be prosecuted for serious management failures and breaching their responsibilities,” it warns.

Help yourself

The latest Mercedes-Benz *Barometer* reveals that watching and playing sport are two of the key



Steve Bridge, Managing Director, Mercedes-Benz Vans UK

activities that help male van drivers switch off and avoid anxiety, stress and depression both inside and outside work. More than 44 per cent said that was the case, with 26 per cent saying that exercise plays a vital role too.

Eating sensibly, getting a decent night’s sleep and keeping the brain active also helps. “Read during your breaks, do a puzzle, or even have a go at learning a foreign language,” suggests a mental health poster produced by Driver Hire.

Drivers should also be more willing to go to the doctor if they feel under the weather. Men are notorious for failing to do so. “Men don’t want to make a fuss, don’t want to make others worry and don’t know how to talk about what they are feeling,” says Andrew Brown, Director of Corporate Partnerships at charity CALM, the Campaign Against Living Miserably.

“Mental issues, as well as physical, could be going unreported and unmanaged,” says Mercedes-Benz Vans UK Managing Director, Steve Bridge. “We’re therefore asking all van owners, operators and drivers to seriously consider speaking to their doctor or their local pharmacy about that little niggle they’ve been ignoring, or the persistent symptoms that have been brushed off. Or even their secret concerns about stress or anxiety levels.

“Doctors and pharmacists will keep whatever you tell them strictly confidential, and won’t judge,” adds Bridge. “That vital conversation could be your first step on the road to recovery.”

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LCVs: safety now comes as standard



Today's vans have little in common with those of old, when scant regard was paid to keeping drivers and pedestrians from being injured. **Steve Banner** reports

Go back 30 years and vans were basic steel boxes on wheels with little in the way of onboard equipment to aid driver comfort and safety. Air-conditioning was unknown, so was power-assisted steering on some 3.5-tonners and onboard electronic devices designed to prevent incidents were non-existent.

When one manufacturer had the temerity to introduce ABS brakes as standard on a new model, several major UK operators demanded its removal, along with a price cut. Fear of losing sales prompted the manufacturer to comply and introduce an ABS-free version it classed as a "fleet special".

How times have changed, partly as a consequence of legislation, partly because technology has moved on significantly and partly because fleets are much more aware of the importance of risk management than they were in the 1980s and 1990s.

Pressure from operators' customers has played a part too. Businesses pitching for contracts to deliver goods to schools or colleges may be obliged to ensure certain safety devices – reversing cameras for example – are fitted to their vehicles to reduce the risk of injury to students.

Anti-lock brakes and ESP – Electronic Stability Programme, designed to stop the van turning over if the driver has to swerve violently in an emergency – are now mandatory. Other systems are being made standard whether they are required by legislation or not and options lists are packed full of devices intended to prevent damage and injuries.

Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz have been leading the charge in this area, a trend illustrated by VW's latest Transporter.

It has been treated to a modest makeover under the T6.1 banner, with a new electro-mechanical steering system, a restyled radiator grille, front bumper and dashboard and a major stress on standard and optional onboard safety systems.

Intended to prevent the vehicle being blown into an adjacent lane and into the path of oncoming traffic if it encounters a sudden gust of wind on an exposed section of motorway, Crosswind Assist is now standard. It uses targeted braking to keep the van stable.

Although the technology is undoubtedly praiseworthy, it is not new. Mercedes-Benz, for example, employs it on the Sprinter.

Standard too on T6.1 is Driver Steering Recommendation. It makes gentle adjustments to maximise the vehicle's stability and counteract over-steer.



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Van safety

▶ VW has also decided to equip all Transporters with Front Assist in conjunction with City Emergency Braking.

The former warns the driver if there is a danger of a front-end collision, gives a jolt to the brakes if the alert is ignored, then ensures full braking power is available instantly if the driver suddenly stops day-dreaming and hits the brake pedal.

City Emergency Braking automatically applies the brakes at speeds of up to 18mph in urban areas if the driver fails to react to the presence of an obstruction. This time around, it has been upgraded so that it detects the presence of pedestrians and cyclists as well as vehicles.

The options list includes Side Protection. Twelve ultrasonic sensors keep a close eye on the van's sides and use visual and audible alerts to tell the driver if T6.1 is straying too close to walls, posts or passing pedestrians.

Also worth considering is its Rear Traffic Alert. Reverse out of an entrance and it warns drivers if they are about to end up in front of an oncoming vehicle.

Opt for satellite navigation and Traffic Sign Recognition comes with it too.

Models available with this system from other



manufacturers include Vauxhall's latest Combo.

It can be specified with a safety pack which includes what Vauxhall refers to as Speed Sign Recognition. This system can tell drivers the limit on whichever road they happen to be driving down, plus the speed they are actually doing on an optional head-up display. If the latter figure is clearly a lot higher than the former, then sensible drivers will slow down.

The pack additionally features Lane Departure Warning, which alerts drivers if they start to wander out of lane on the motorway.

Vauxhall is owned by PSA Group and Combo is also marketed by Citroen as the Berlingo and Peugeot as the Partner. Toyota is selling it as the Proace City under a joint-venture agreement with PSA.



Remote onboard monitoring can help to deter drivers from speeding, accelerating too harshly and taking bends too quickly

Isuzu's D-Max Utah 4x4 double-cab pick-up comes with rear parking sensors, a reversing camera and Trailer Sway Control

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Volkswagen has decided to equip all Transporters with Front Assist in conjunction with City Emergency Braking

Vehicles sometimes have to be structurally modified to accommodate all this fresh technology. In T6.1's case a larger support frame has been fitted to reduce vibration in the front radar control unit and improve the accuracy of its Adaptive Cruise Control.

Other manufacturers are stressing the importance of safety too. To take an example at random, Isuzu's D-Max Utah 4x4 double-cab pick-up comes with rear parking sensors, a reversing camera and Trailer Sway Control. The system responds if a trailer being towed starts to snake and looks as though it might turn over.

Available with other makes and models, including almost the entire Ford light commercial range, Trailer Sway Control reduces engine torque while gradually increasing brake pressure on all four of the towing vehicle's wheels.

Utah is also fitted with driver, passenger and curtain side airbags. They can provide invaluable protection if something goes severely wrong despite all the onboard technology and the driver's best endeavours.

Responsible driving

Most of the aforementioned devices will be of little use if whoever is at the wheel insists on driving irresponsibly. This is where remote onboard monitoring can be of help to deter drivers from speeding, accelerating too harshly and taking bends too quickly.

Fleet managers can review the data generated by the monitoring package, draw it to the

attention of the driver concerned and use targeted training to iron out bad driving habits. A number of independent suppliers such as MiX Telematics and GreenRoad supply this type of system and van manufacturers are starting to introduce them too.

Launched in 2018, the latest Mercedes-Benz Sprinter is available with a number of web-based support packages under the PRO banner, including

Efficient Driving Style Analysis. It records information on an individual's behaviour behind the wheel which can then be used to help achieve improvements, thereby increasing safety and cutting fuel usage.

Erratic behaviour on the highway may sometimes be due to driver fatigue.

Sprinter and a number of other vehicles feature Attention Assist. It displays a coffee cup symbol on the instrument panel when it reckons drivers have been driving for too long, behaviour at the wheel suggests they are getting drowsy and they really need to take a break.

Onboard safety systems aren't perfect

On a recent drive of a 3.5-tonner fitted with an emergency braking system similar to VW's Front Assist, the technology unexpectedly cut in twice.

It appeared to confuse a sleeping policeman, then street furniture positioned close to the kerb, with another vehicle.

While that can be annoying, it need not be a major issue just so long as it doesn't happen every five minutes and so long as drivers are made aware that this can occur. Greater stress on training is vital so that drivers understand what onboard systems can and cannot do, if they are to get the best out of them and remain safe on the road.

The danger is that they will assume that their van has a greater degree of autonomy than it has in reality – and the consequences of such an assumption could be disastrous.

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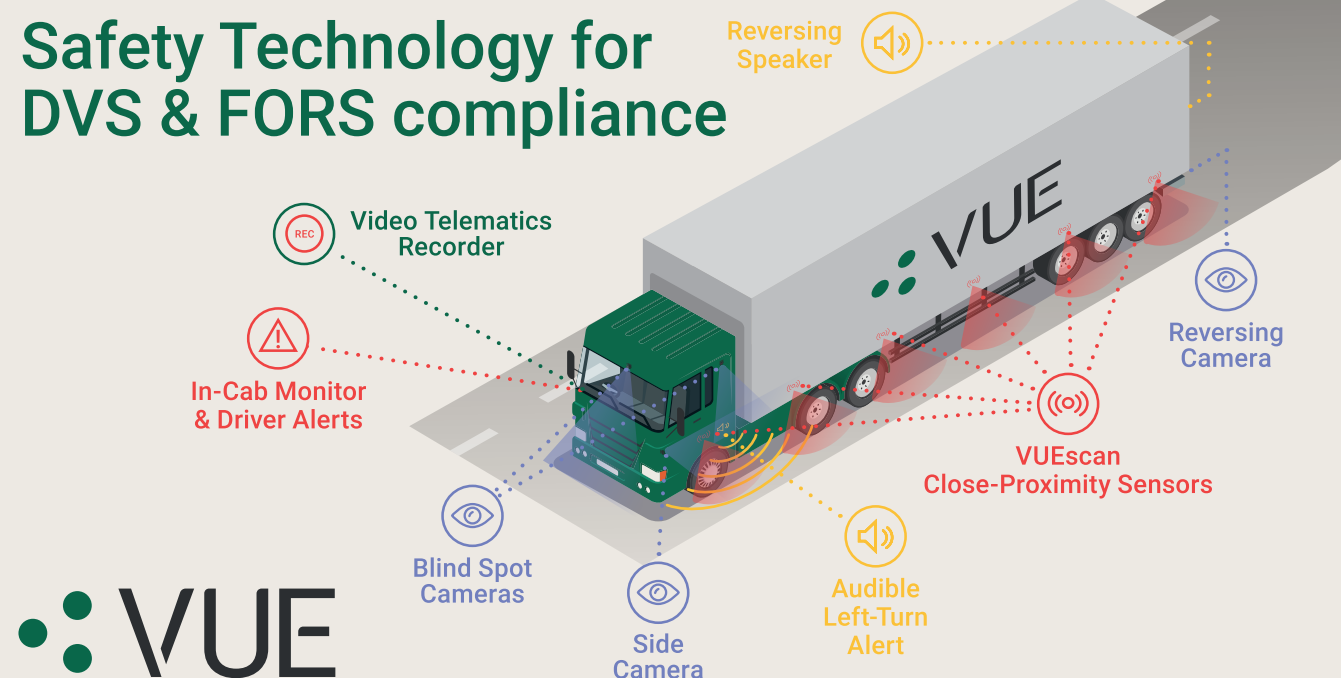
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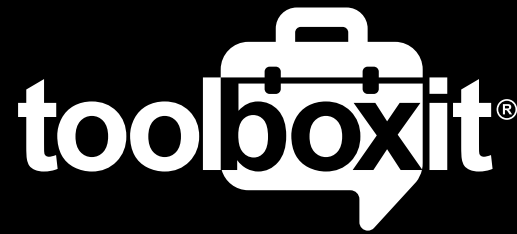
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Advertorial

Weight watchers – coming to a smart motorway near you

According to the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), many vans, minibuses and welfare accessible vehicles are overloaded. This means they are unsafe, are running illegally and – in the event of an collision – are likely to be uninsured.

The ramifications of overloading upon fleet managers could be very costly indeed.

Figures published by the DVSA every year are showing an annual rise in instances of vehicle overloading and enforcement officers have become adept at spotting offenders. Allied to the advent of 12 or more 'Weigh-in-Motion' sensors in the UK road network, this means it is only a matter of time before overloaded vehicles are stopped and checked.

Can you afford for this to happen?

Having seen the sensors in operation SvTech Ltd, the UK's leading re-rating specialist, can testify as to their accuracy and efficiency at 60-70mph. Once tagged for investigation, the vehicle will be pulled over and reweighed to ascertain individual axle weights.

This is the point where the driver finds out that not only is the van over the gross vehicle weight (GVW), but also that the rear axle is overloaded way above the design weight and thus is dangerous in the eyes of the law. Add to that the tyres have a load rating below the actual weight and this is a third, more serious offence.

When inspecting the driver's licence, if officers find that the driver doesn't possess a C1 entitlement, having weighed over 3,500kg, they are now looking at a fourth offence – driving without a licence. So points, fines and bans are not uncommon.

SvTech is a member of the SMMT, so the firm is in touch with proposed legislation changes, enforcement statistics and the market in general and is aware of the Department for Transport's (DfT's) growing interest in the fleet arena.

Record numbers of vans

Recently, the Freight Transport Association (FTA) announced that there are a record four million vans on the UK's roads. The FTA has calculated that there could be as many as 1.65 million unroadworthy vans in operation. DVSA figures reveal a 49.7% first-time MoT failure rate, notably due to tyre and light failures, and 88.5% of 11,000 vans stopped at the roadside annually being overloaded and 63% having serious mechanical defects.

SvTech can help fleet operators with their

payload issues, but it has to be noted that with any vehicle uprate, consideration must be given to the licence restrictions of younger drivers.

Driving without the correct entitlement is as serious an offence as driving with no licence.

Don't become a statistic – check your vehicle weights and talk to the uprating experts to discuss any issues. SvTech operates free weight checks across the country with the same technology as the DVSA, so if any fleet operator wishes to get some idea of their vehicles' weights in operation, the firm is happy to visit their site, weigh off the vehicles and give the operators some idea as to their options.



The ramifications of overloading upon fleet managers could be very costly indeed

Vans and Light Commercial

DVSA reveals that 88.5% of almost 11,000 LCVs stopped at the roadside annually are overloaded

With plans to pull over more LCVs on the roadside and potentially to enforce HGV-like legislation on the LCV market, it's about time you checked your van's laden weights, especially the individual axle weights, as SvTech has discovered many more vans have overloaded rear axles than previously thought. Any overload could invalidate your insurance, and if severe enough, could affect your braking and handling.

SvTech is seeing an increasing amount of van uprates at the moment, especially under 3500kg, where we are uprating from 2800kg to 3000/3200kg and from 3200kg up to 3500kg. This additional 300kg of payload is proving vital for many van owners, as it is very easy to overload these vehicles.

Whilst we uprate 3500kg vans by up to 500kg, there are some issues to take into consideration when going above 3500kg. A van over 3500kg needs a speed limiter fitted and, if carrying goods commercially, the van will need a tachograph to be fitted.

In addition, it means that the van can only be driven by someone who either passed their test before 1997 or by someone with a C1 entitlement on their driving licence.

These factors often make the uprate over 3500kg unviable or impractical for some fleet operators, however if the van is being regularly overloaded, SvTech would recommend uprating. We offer fleet discounts and can advise on the next steps. Please contact us to discuss your fleet needs.

Caution

It's important to remember that if a driver doesn't possess the C1 entitlement, and they overload a 3500kg van, in the event of being stopped, it would also be considered as a licence offence, which can hold strict penalties. It's worth weighing the van in an unladen and fully laden state to ascertain your limits.

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Advertorial

Maxx-imum visibility for Maxx-imum safety



More and more, the emphasis on improving safety on Britain's roads is reliant on ever more expensive and complex technology, but it is important to remember that often the simplest solutions can offer the greatest and most cost-effective solutions. Among these is the possibility to 'flash' all amber side markers on a vehicle. This is not just the fitting of additional indicator lamps in the side markers, but rather the whole unit.

Aspöck Systems, Europe's largest manufacturer of commercial vehicle lighting, has developed the Unimaxx side marker. Based on the long-serving and proven Unipoint lamp, the Unimaxx lamp boasts high intensity LEDs that provide the maximum permitted light output, while modifications to the lens have increased the angle of visibility to 180 degrees, allowing all road users to see the flashing indicators from all angles – at all times.

The lamp, when fitted with Aspöck's SMCG (Side marker control gear) allows easy, cost-effective fitment that meets the demands of IP6K9K and ADR and is easily retrofitable or installed at the chassis production stage.

Aspöck's approach to common-sense, value-for-money solutions is complemented by the release of the new rear lamp, EcoLED 2. This lamp boasts one of the largest tail and stop illuminated areas in the market, ensuring that other road users can clearly see the vehicle in the most challenging conditions.

This, along with the progressive indicator, ISO pulse compatibility and fully-serviceable lenses, ensure that a fleet operation should benefit from reduced lifetime costs through reduced downtime and spares costs.

Adam Mitchell, of Aspöck UK Ltd, believes that: "The key to achieving the safest operation possible lies in this integrated solution – passive systems such as good quality bright lamps like the Unimaxx and EcoLED 2, Aspöck's Camera,



DVR and side scan systems to assist the driver and the radar reversing system as the final failsafe in a co-ordinated and uniform system, rather than a piecemeal approach."

Mark Toghill, the UK Sales and Technical Manager, adds: "The combination of low and high tech systems should allow operators to see a real return on investment due to the reduction of downtime resulting from incidents."



"The combination of low and high tech systems should allow operators to see a real return on investment"



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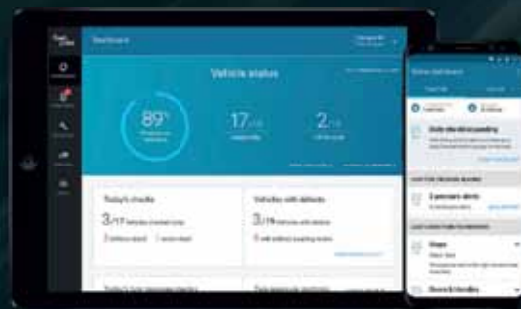
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