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Welcome

The FORS Members' Conference is always an impressive, informative and thought-provoking event. Every year, I come away from it vowing to keep in mind what I saw and heard and to adopt those key messages both at work and at home.

This year's theme of 'Safer, Smarter, Greener' was a reminder to us all that there is still work to be done in the transport industry – but there is also a lot of potential. The three topics are all areas where individuals and companies can make a big difference with relatively small steps.

On the subject of safety, workplace incidents are not things anyone wants to deal with, but adhering to health and safety guidelines and procedures has shown they can be reduced. The fallout from these workplace incidents costs time and money and can reflect badly on a business, both to those within it and also the outside world looking in. As such, we should be doing everything we can to keep ourselves – and our fellow workers – as safe as possible.

Many examples of working smarter were given by the chair of the FORS Members' Conference, Jo Godsmark, who recalled events on a recent trip to Zambia. Living in a country of limited resources, the Zambians had worked with what they had to

create products, procedures and initiatives that could help improve – and save – lives. Closer to home – in an environment where solutions are only a mouse-click away – we should also be willing to think outside the box to help bring about change for the better.

Finally, there is a lot of talk about climate change at the moment, from all generations and parts of the world.

Whatever your own personal view, there are ways to help protect the planet and the resources within it. Think about the consumption of materials in your life – everything from single-use plastics to the fuel in your vehicle fleet – and address what is really essential. Again, small changes can make a big difference.

It's important to remember that 'Safer, Smarter, Greener' is for life, not just the FORS Members' Conference.

Enjoy the issue.

Matthew Eisenegger,
Editor



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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

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

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Summit Business Centre

The Old Police Station

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News

Big demand for FORS security and counter terrorism training

A total of 110,000 individuals have completed the award-winning FORS Professional security and counter terrorism training module, developed by FORS to help support its drivers and increase awareness of the threat posed by terrorist incidents. The FORS Professional Security and counter terrorism online eLearning module has been completed by over 110,000 FORS members since it was first introduced in January 2018.

Earlier this year, the module won the Counter Terrorism Education Project Award for its role in raising awareness of security and terrorist threats, specifically in terms of theft of vehicles or loads and the use of vehicles as weapons.

With the launch of the FORS Standard version 5 in January 2018, completion of the eLearning module became mandatory at entry level FORS Bronze, reflecting growing concerns about commercial vehicle security and to emphasise the importance of driver awareness of terrorist threats.

During the online course, which is free to access for all FORS members, attendees are taught how to identify threats

from terrorism. They learn the importance of vehicle security and measures which can be introduced to protect drivers and vehicles against hijack, theft and physical attack, with advice on how to report suspicious behaviour or activity. The module also aims to improve driver identification and the reporting of suspicious activity.

"It is a sad fact that commercial vans and trucks have been used as a weapon in terrorist-related incidents, both in the UK and abroad," said FORS Manager, Sonia Hayward.

"For drivers of commercial vehicles, this is a huge responsibility and we are delighted that FORS is helping to equip them with the knowledge to play their part in tackling terrorism.

"The success of this training is in no small part due to the collaborative approach with which it was designed," she added. "FORS worked closely with Transport for London, the Metropolitan Police, the Department for Transport and many other major transport stakeholders to ensure our members have access to the most relevant information, and we are grateful for the support of all the agencies involved."

Triscan and HID Global tie-up

Fuel management systems manufacturer and supplier The Triscan Group has established a supplier relationship with HID Global. This new relationship is designed to widen the range of identification devices, which aim to maximise and safeguard fuel.

The HID identiFUEL vehicle tags automate and simplify vehicle identification. Vehicle tags are programmable with specific fuel type requirements and suitable for multiple vehicle styles. The nozzle unit on the HID identiFUEL is a robust reader, which is installed on the fuelling dispenser to read and transmit vehicle tag data to the fuel management system (FMS) for authorisation.

"Our client base includes some of the largest fleets in Europe, so we strive to continually improve every aspect of our business for these blue-chip companies," said Andrea Whittaker, Managing Director, The Triscan Group. "Our team continuously work to build relationships with both customers and manufacturers."

Mirror-mounted camera system

Camera equipment supplier C-KO used the FORS Members' Conference to introduce its latest product range to some of Britain's most safety-conscious truck operators.

The Blind Spot HGV Monitor features cameras fixed on trucks' mirror arms, linked to screens inside the cab. Contrary to the conventional configuration, instead of being mounted centrally on the dashboard, the screens are split – one is positioned on each of the host vehicle's A-pillars.

"The advantages offered by moving the monitors to the A-pillars are clear," said Nick Turner, Sales Director at C-KO. "The driver only has to look in one direction – rather than sideways to the mirror and then down to the dash. At the same time each screen shows the view from its own side of the vehicle, so the driver's



understanding of what he or she is seeing is much more intuitive."

The system uses cameras on each side of the vehicle, to give a comprehensive rearward view as well as covering all blind spots along the sides of the truck. The images are relayed to 12.3-inch screens with high definition and automatic dimming capability, giving the driver full visibility at a glance in all weather and light conditions.

New vehicle inspection app from Northgate

Van rental company Northgate has launched a vehicle inspection app that has been designed to facilitate and streamline the end-to-end management of fleet vehicles.

Powered by CheckedSafe, the app allows Northgate customers to monitor all daily vehicle checks at the click of a button, providing added insights into where the checks were carried out, how long they took and what – if any – defects were identified. The system uses existing devices – namely smartphones or tablets – so no additional capital investment is required to use it.

The app has several bespoke features specifically tailored for Northgate customers, including a free 45-day trial and customisable templates among others. Fleets can also go totally paperless using the full document storage suite. Using the app costs only £1 a week for each vehicle.

"The introduction of the Northgate Vehicle Inspection App reinforces our commitment to growing Northgate's product offerings to meet our customers' needs," said Neil McCrossan, Sales and Marketing Director at Northgate Vehicle Hire. "By enabling fleets to carry out daily checks on their vehicles digitally, businesses now have access to a product that makes the vehicle hire management process even more insightful and efficient."

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FORS conference proves a big success

The fourth annual FORS Members' Conference saw a packed hall of 450 delegates explore how the voluntary accreditation scheme can lead to safer, smarter and greener operations.

This year's conference theme of 'Safer, Smarter, Greener' reflected the triple purpose of FORS accreditation and its ongoing commitment to help its membership base to lessen their environmental impact and in turn, help reduce costs.

Alongside the conference, delegates could access a unique exhibition of 40 FORS Associates and four FORS Affinity Partners, showcasing products and services

designed to help members meet the requirements of the FORS Standard and assist in driving-up industry best practice, with headline sponsor FORS Associate Tachograph analysis software specialists Aquarius IT taking centre stage.

Karla Harding, Head of Quality and Compliance at Simply Waste Solutions, a FORS Bronze member, said: "This is our first time at the FORS conference, and I am deeply impressed by the focus on efficiency and innovation. It feels like the industry is really trying to improve itself and that FORS is playing a key role in this. We will definitely be coming back."

John Hix, FORS Director, said: "The

FORS Members' Conference is our opportunity to welcome a large cross-section of our members from across the UK and explore in detail some of the pressing issues facing them as operators from diverse fields.

"Safety is always at the heart of FORS, and we know our members are fully committed to achieving and maintaining safety standards far beyond the legal minimum requirements. We hope the event has really emphasised to our members the importance of greater efficiency to help reduce emissions and deliver climate protection."

● For a full review of the FORS Members' Conference, turn to page 12



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 easily 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.

"SvTech can help with uprating your LCV to give you more payload, keeping you safe and legal. Most makes and models are catered for."

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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Grey fleets 'baffle' businesses

After 18 years, the issue of grey fleets continues to 'baffle' businesses across the UK with the majority having little, if any, awareness of the implications of drivers using their own vehicles for business purposes. And the challenges are likely to get increasingly complex as more people use their own vehicle for work purposes and business trends, such as remote working and a more transient workforce, continue to evolve.

That is the warning being issued by Licence Bureau, the driver licence validation service supplier, which suggests that almost all businesses have some form of grey fleet in operation, despite many unaware of the fact and the potential implications it has on the business.

"There is nothing wrong with operating a grey fleet, but it needs to be acknowledged and understood and then 'operated' rather than just left to chance," said Malcolm Maycock, Managing Director of Licence Bureau. "Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, employers have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work, including while driving for work, of their employees. There is no excuse for companies to allow staff – unwittingly or otherwise – to drive around unchecked in their own vehicles and that includes office based and the increasing number of remote workers."

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Fuels of the future

Renault Trucks sets out its forthcoming powertrain visions. **By Richard Simpson**

Diesel engines will continue to power long-haul trucks for the foreseeable future, but operators engaged in urban deliveries are going to have to be prepared to use an evolving spectrum of fuels to suit local conditions and legislation.

That was the message from Renault Trucks' Alternative Energies Development Director, Francois Savoye, as he hosted an 'Alternative Fuels Day' at the manufacturer's headquarters in Lyon, France.

Despite Renault Trucks being owned by the Volvo Group, Savoye made it plain that each company in the group was responsible for its own profit and loss and could select group technology or choose outside provision as it thought fit. So, while Volvo Trucks is confident that methane gas has a role to play in long-haul transport – and has developed its own unique 'diesel ignition' technology for this in conjunction with Westport and Delphi – Renault Trucks sees gas as only a transition fuel for urban

applications until the market is ready for electric vehicles.

Consequently, it has gone outside the group for proprietary gas technology in the form of the Cummins 320hp, 9-litre CNG engine and Allison fully-automatic transmission – a driveline that is achieving success in the bus market and will be fitted to Range D and Range D Wide chassis models.

A brief drive in an unladen 18-tonne gas-powered Range D Wide refuse collection vehicle (RCV) revealed the engine to be smooth and quiet, while the Allison transmission (standard kit on most diesel-engined RCVs) was simple to use.

The torque converter effectively concealed any lack of bottom-end grunt compared to a diesel.

But electric is the way ahead for urban and some regional tasks, according to Renault, despite some reservations from customers.

Range will always be an

issue on electric trucks until such time as there is a leap forward in battery technology. But Renault Trucks is currently involved in a joint-venture with Samsung to not only develop new batteries, but also ensure their environmental and ethical acceptability. The 200km range of Renault Trucks' current electric offerings should be acceptable for urban refuse collection (65km round trips) and distribution (100 to 150km daily). The Master ZE van

can cover 120km on a single charge and the batteries do not intrude into the cab or load compartment.

Savoye emphasised that specifying the correct (rather than just the largest) battery size for the application was essential to business success with electric vehicles. He also stated that the economics of electric vehicle operation were completely different, with a high up-front cost being subsequently recouped with

massive savings in fuel costs and reduced maintenance requirements.

Hydrogen hope

One day, hydrogen will replace batteries as an energy source for electric vehicles: "Hydrogen increases range for EVs, it has better energy densities than batteries and offers faster refuelling," said Savoye.

"But a hydrogen fuel-cell truck is an electric truck, so Renault Trucks will concentrate on

LEFT: Optifuel Lab 3 tractor unit features extended 'chisel' nose

battery electrics for the time being. Once the hydrogen network is mature enough, it becomes another option."

Diesel would remain the long-haul fuel of choice, but there could be a phase-in of bio-based and synthetic fuels.

Renault Trucks was aiming to make diesel go further in the long haul with the development of its Optifuel Lab 3 experimental truck, which is part of the Falcon (Flexible and Aerodynamic truck for Low CONsumption) project; a French government-funded partnership between the truck manufacturer, trailer-maker Fruehauf, lubricant supplier Total and Michelin Tyres, and a spectrum of smaller French technology and design companies and academic institutions.



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An automatic choice

Allison Transmission makes the case for fully-automatic trucks in urban and construction applications. **By Richard Simpson**

Automatic transmissions from Allison dominate two sectors in British road transport: refuse collection and fire-fighting. But their use in general haulage has, up to now, been very limited.

In part, this is because of their success in the refuse sector. There is a misconceived belief that an Allison 'box is suitable only for low-speed use and

that vehicles equipped with it are doomed to scream along at 2,000rpm at highway speeds, consuming vast amounts of fuel and creating a lot of noise.

Allison begs to differ. It is now making what it calls a "humble approach" to UK truck operators in two sectors: construction and urban freight, urging them to consider the automatic alternative.



Sergio Camolese, Allison Transmission Director of Market Development in Europe, is cautiously optimistic about expanding outside these core applications. Questioned about the viability of fully-automatic transmissions when automated manuals (AMTs) are increasingly the norm, he turned the question around.

"We see the increasing acceptance of AMT as a positive in getting full-automatics accepted. AMT has taken away the prejudice against two-pedal driving, but we question whether it takes away the market for full autos," he said.

Many drivers of AMT two-pedal trucks will criticise their vehicles for the moments when they cannot decide which gear to select, causing frustration in heavy traffic, which is just when the driver should be able to focus on the situation around him, rather than be wondering what his truck is going to do next.

This can be irksome on the approaches to roundabouts and other situations where the truck must be able to accelerate decisively into gaps in the traffic. A moment's hesitation can see other road users nipping in to fill the gap and perhaps leave the truck stranded across a yellow box junction.

There is no such hesitation where the AMT is replaced by an Allison and the torque multiplier effect opens opportunities for engine downsizing, thus reducing the vehicle's carbon footprint.

"The better launch provided by the Allison torque converter opens the opportunity to install a smaller engine for London operations. Instead of a 400 or 440hp 13-litre unit, an eight-legger could go down to an 11 or even nine-litre engine without adverse impact on on-road performance," said Ashley Brooks, Area Director for UK and Ireland, Allison Transmission.

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Safer, Smarter, Greener

A look back at the fourth FORS Members' Conference, which provided essential advice, information and guidance for operators. **By John Challen**

Having celebrated a decade of evolving best practice in 2018, The FORS Members' Conference theme in 2019 was 'Safer, Smarter, Greener'. These three areas featured prominently in the presentations, with speakers highlighting both how their operations had sought to address the challenges and suggesting how delegates could make improvements to their own workplaces. Coupled with the packed conference sessions, there was once again ample opportunity to talk to the 40 organisations who formed the event's exhibition, including the headline sponsor for the FORS Members' Conference 2019, Aquarius IT.

The start of proceedings

The event's host and chair for the day was Jo Godsmark, Director and Lead Consultant of BigChange and an active member of the CILT (Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport) Outsourcing and Procurement Forum. Godsmark welcomed delegates, telling them that their presence confirmed the fantastic support that FORS receives and recognised how fleets are respecting compliance.

She said the audience was a like-minded community that has a tough job and faces many challenges in the future, including climate change and safety. But, she added, with the help and support from FORS – in the form of numerous resources including training courses, online guidance and the conference itself – they could collectively make a real difference.

Godsmark is also a chair and trustee of the international development organisation Transaid, which works on safe, sustainable and affordable transport solutions across the developing world. She



Jo Godsmark

used her time at the beginning of the day to highlight the challenges facing people in those countries, compared with those operating in the UK.

The latest FORS news

With a FORS update, Paul Wilkes, FORS Business Services Manager, reinforced how improving safety, working smarter and looking after other vulnerable road users had been at the heart of FORS since it was established. He talked about the important focus within the Governance and Standards Advisory Group (GSAG) in relation to improving

the environment. Two different working groups had been established, he said, the first looking at franchise operators with multiple operating sites and the other assessing the possible implementation of new technologies within the workshop environment, such as virtual reality.

He confirmed that the working groups had made their recommendations and that the outputs would be made public to FORS members in 2020. He also detailed how GSAG members had offered experience, support and time as part of a new FORS mentoring service.

The service is designed to put registered operations in touch with long-standing Gold members who can share their experiences.

In his presentation, Wilkes also covered the introduction of the unified audit option for FORS members. Organisations with a single operating centre can choose to opt for a combined Silver and Gold application, he explained, which means that progression to Gold would be achieved by submitting a single, combined, Silver and Gold application and meant they will have a single Silver and Gold expiry date.

News from the Highways

The next speaker was John Kerner, Project Director at Highways England, who explained that Highways England was concerned with connecting the country, people, facilities and workers with jobs

– and businesses with the economy. He told delegates that Highways England was a part of the transport business and wanted to help firms improve connections with customers to have safer and greener journeys. Kerner revealed that these freight-related journeys total around 400 million every day, representing 4.5 million miles travelled on motorways and major A roads.

"Highways England works on three key imperatives: safety, which is paramount; our ability to deliver and our customer service," Kerner told delegates.

"The Highways England journey is about breathing life into these three areas – it is not just producing strategies or plans; it's about actions. We are providing a better service to the freight industry and working with you to help you better manage the challenges we face on the road network."



John Kerner, Project Director at Highways England



Paul Wilkes, FORS Business Services Manager



Marc Holloway, Regional Transport Manager, Rexel UK



Kier's Head of Customer and Communications, Natalie Geraghty

Secrets of the supply chain

Marc Holloway, Regional Transport Manager at electrical wholesaler Rexel UK, explained the role of the company in delivering goods to consumers safely and efficiently. He paid tribute to FORS, which he said had "helped us to look at ourselves, the way we operate and how we can improve in several areas". He confirmed that since FORS accreditation, the company had cut the number of vehicles on the fleet, reduced overall mileages and fuel consumption and emissions through the process. "We are smarter now as a result of FORS," he commented.

On the subject of being 'greener', Holloway explained that Rexel had done a lot of work with FORS and LoCITY, which aims to cut commercial vehicle emissions and improve air quality, saying that the pool of knowledge was helping to improve vehicle choices in the future. "We are facing changing times, but all that is happening is we are changing the method of propulsion – it's not rocket science," he argued. "We have had electric vehicles on test that generate a lot of interest and people are keen to find out more about them."

Help with mental health

A change in direction followed the Rexel presentation, as Kier's Head of Customer and Communications, Natalie Geraghty, tackled the subject of mental health. "Our company has recognised that we work in a male-dominated environment and it's no secret that men find it difficult to talk about their feelings," said Geraghty. She explained how the company had introduced a series of videos, including one about an operative called Charlie who experienced a near-miss that changed his life and affected his mental health and wellbeing.

Geraghty called for more honesty and confidence

when reporting sickness, when the real issue could be mental health and wellbeing. "We want a more focused workforce and we want to help, even if it is getting people together and drinking tea and eating cake – even those sessions can help encourage talking and help make sure people feel ok," she said.

Tyre talk at the conference

Edwin Farquhar, Key Account Manager at Michelin Services and Solutions, presented at the conference to reinforce the importance of a dedicated approach to tyre safety.

He stressed that keeping a closer eye on tyres could help decrease running costs and increase efficiency across the fleet. Farquhar explained that the aim of the company was to create solutions that were tailored to the needs of the customer. "All journeys are different and what we do has to be different for all operators," he said.

The first thing when implementing a tyre policy was to ensure staff fully understand it and get to grips with it, Farquhar maintained. "Standard policies don't take into account the nature of the business or its aims or objectives from a tyre policy (e.g. customer services, maximising the use of vehicles, etc.)," he warned.

Farquhar then urged fleet managers not to keep details of the policy to themselves. "Tell everyone that comes into contact with your tyres what your policy is," he stressed, adding that everyone should know why specific measures are put into place. Appointing a tyre champion within a business is another important step, he added.



Guy Reynolds, Commercial Director at Aquarius IT, headline sponsor of the FORS Members' Conference



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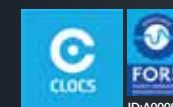
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Ruth Waring, Director of Advisory Plus

He urged delegates to get to know their tyres by checking tread depths, damage, wear and the overall condition as well as monitoring pressures and noting any signs of distress.

Talking technology to improve fleet compliance

Turning the conversation to online tools, Ruth Waring, Director of Advisory Plus, the consultancy arm of BigChange, reminded the audience that fleet compliance wasn't just the O Licence for HGVs and PCVs and that all fleets – including vans and cars – must comply with health and safety guidance and legislation such as HSE's 'Driving for Work' guidance and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. "We need to think about management controls and the advice from the HSE is to split the remaining content into three areas: safe driver, safe vehicle and safe journey – looking at the apps and the technology on the market.

For 'Safe Driver', Waring explained that for licence checks, when it came to new recruits, it tended to be an area where some operators think "if they've got a licence, they're fine". But she stressed that they actually need to be driver licence evangelists and very clear on the specifics of the dates, points on the licence and whether or not the licence actually belongs to the driver.

On the subject of 'Safe Vehicle', Waring advised using apps to ensure the driver has done all of the necessary walkaround checks. And to overcome the challenge of scheduling planned maintenance and ensuring it is completed, she urged delegates to avoid being overwhelmed by paperwork by making use of fleet management systems.

Finally, turning to 'Safe Journey', routing and scheduling software was a dynamic and strategic way of combating fatigue and maximising fuel economy for a journey, she said.

Be safe; be smart

Following Waring, it was the turn of Adrian Barrett, Director at Road Tech, to talk tachographs, reminding delegates that, following legislation that came into force on 15 June 2019, all new vehicles must be fitted with a second generation smart tachograph. The driving force behind the new technology, he explained, was that these units will further improve road safety, guarantee competition and decrease the administrative burden for transport operators. He reassured delegates that the new tachographs looked much like the previous ones and that some technology from the current crop had been carried over, such as smart downloads and driver data.


One minor change he pointed out was that the new cards had 'G2' on them, as opposed to 'G1', but drivers didn't have to automatically change their cards because they had a new G2 smart tachograph. "The new cards are fully compatible and collect new fields of data," he stated. "They are compatible with the older tachographs, while old cards work with the new G2 units."

Compliance is key

After lunch, Graham Holder, the FORS Quality Assurance and Compliance Manager, took to the stage to talk about the appeals process for FORS compliance breaches and the thinking behind



Graham Holder, the FORS Quality Assurance and Compliance Manager




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► enforcement decisions. The team, he said, was established in June 2017 and since then had 1,533 formal notifications, enquiries or sanctions levied against companies that have been non-compliant to the FORS Standard.

One of the main aims of his presentation was to cover the misconceptions surrounding the accreditation process and to add clarity to the situation.

He highlighted some of these issues, including the requirement in FORS to nominate a number of Champions. "There are three FORS Champions that are required to be nominated under a Bronze audit: fuel and emissions; work related road risk and counter terrorism," he explained. "These individuals can be singular – with one person responsible for the whole section – or be multiple nominations, i.e. one for each topic."

Holder then clarified that, "Where in previous versions of the FORS Standard, the policies and procedures were disseminated throughout the management, vehicles, drivers and operations sections, the requirement to have policies is now under the management section. Seventeen policies are required and they cover requirements from M1 to O7." He explained that these policy



David Jordan,
Director of
Education,
Qualifications and
Training, at CILT

documents could be hard copy or electronic, whatever is fit for purpose for the company. "It can also be 17 policy documents or one policy document," he added. "However, if you produce a single policy document that covers all of the 17 requirements, you must ensure that, at the time of audit, the auditor is satisfied you have met the requirement that is being addressed."

With regards to small operators, Holder explained that, "In FORS, if you have fewer than five vehicles and five employees, you are classed as small operator and you can demonstrate how you meet some of the requirements verbally, for example you can talk through your policies." "If you have more than five vehicles or employees, you need to have written policies in place." Other items covered by Holder included safety eLearning and the end of transition date for M3, G5 and G9, which is the 31 December 2019, meaning all training from 1 January 2020 must have been undertaken as required in Annexes 1 and 2 of the FORS Standard.

Future fuels under the spotlight

Professor Geoff Clarke, Freight Consultant at AECOM, chaired an informative panel discussion relating to alternative fuels. The session covered the variety of alternatives that have been – and will be – considered by operators looking to run more

environmentally-friendly fleets.

First to take to the floor was Graham Neagus, Renault Trucks UK's Head of LCV, who admitted that previous electric vehicles had been functional, but not really fit for purpose from the point of view of transport and logistics. Recognising that customers want silent deliveries at night to take traffic off the road and ease congestion, he said that, as an OEM, Renault Trucks was listening and trying to prepare people for change.

The other big alternative to diesel is gas-powered vehicles and fighting their corner was Martin Flach, an Alternative Fuel Consultant and former long-term employee at Iveco. He told the audience it was important that there was a wide range of options when looking at alternatives to diesel, but what people want is something that is as efficient as diesel in terms of total cost of ownership, reliability, safety, and payload.

"Electric vehicles and fuel cells are less good for longer distances and the rural environment, while hybrids didn't really take off at Euro 4 and Euro 5 because the cost benefit didn't work at the time, but they may well do in the future," he said.

Finally Brian Robinson, Leader of the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership's Working Group, stated that in 10-15 years' time, the world needed be very different to what it is now. "There are a range of options around and an increasing number of fleets moving over to 100 per cent electric for their urban work," he said. "But it's not just about how you power the vehicle, it's about what the vehicles are and what you can carry onboard."

Logistical challenges

Then it was time for CILT to take to the stage, with the institute's Director of Education, Qualifications and Training, David Jordan, looking at the

'Smarter' element of transport and future solutions to transport challenges. He talked about the journey to 2035 within the industry and what operators could expect to see in the short-, medium- and long-term. He said that the news of Volvo's VERA autonomous truck concept being in operation was a surprise to him – specifically the fact that what appeared to be the future was already here. He also picked out the Nikola TRE hydrogen fuel cell truck, which is due to enter production around 2023 with a range of 750 miles and the semi-autonomous truck designed by Mueyon Cho based on a Mercedes-Benz chassis. This latter concept could have a range of 5,000km, he said, but warned that it was some way off and predicted for the early 2030s.

The future of FORS

In the final presentation of the day, John Hix, Director of FORS, addressed the audience, outlining the future of FORS and what the next 12 months had in store – detailing a structural change to the way FORS is organised. "There are currently three core elements to the FORS programme – governance, administration and certification bodies. They are all delivered by the FORS Community Partnership (AECOM, CILT and Fleet Source) and AECOM is the concession holder, which is let, under a concession contract, from Transport for London (TfL)," he explained. "Over the past 12 months TfL has held industry days to ask stakeholders how they think the scheme might be strengthened and, in response, there are two main changes that will create a new FORS future model."

Firstly, to create a clear separation between governance, administration and audits, Hix confirmed that the scheme governance will be procured by TfL through a separate services contract. The winner of the contract will be responsible for GSAG and the content of the FORS Standard, he confirmed. "It is also intended that the successful candidate would take over approval

and licensing of FORS training courses and FORS Professional – and ultimately they will have a hand in appointing the audit providers," he said.

The second key change concerned the certification body. "To encourage more audit providers, it is intended that audit bodies will be able to set their own fees for audits, rather than them being set centrally," said Hix, adding that the changes will be part of a two-stage process.

"The first part – the separation – will be completed by mid-2020 and the full transition will be done by January 2022. "We've been looking for further audit partners for some time and have appointed DriveTech to provide Bronze audits and it has been doing so since October," he revealed.

Addressing the upcoming Version 6 of the FORS Standard – due to arrive in late 2020 – Hix admitted the organisation needed to be careful about what it asks for in relation to the new version and said those responsible would take into account feedback from members.

"One thing the Governance group will be looking at is mixed accreditation, where vehicles in the same operating centre would be at different accreditation levels," confirmed Hix, adding that GSAG would be asked to set up a working group about vehicle safety equipment.

Finally, Hix told the audience to look out for a new eLearning module about pedestrian safety and a new classroom package related to driver fatigue.



Martin Flach, an
Alternative Fuel
Consultant and former
long-term employee at
Iveco

John Hix, Director of
FORS



All for a good cause

Caroline Barber, Chief Executive of Transaid, was given the opportunity to update the audience about the work the charity has been doing in Africa. She explained the two core areas of the charity's work: providing access to essential healthcare services and driver training, in a bid to tackle death and injuries on the road.

Barber explained that the decision to work on driver training was in response to the fact that, of the 1.35 million people killed on the roads every year, a disproportionate number die in developing countries and particularly sub-Saharan

Africa. "We need to focus on this subject and we need more funding. We are doing good work in the UK and we need to take those approaches and best practice overseas," she told delegates.

She highlighted operators who had been involved in driver training by sending trainers over to Africa to help with the initiative. In Tanzania, she explained that six trainers had been trained over the past year who had then gone on to train nearly 8,000 drivers. Other countries working towards this level of training are Uganda, Zambia and Ethiopia.

She urged the audience to get involved however they could, including taking part

in a Land's End to John O'Groats cycle challenge, with options of completing the whole course, having a company relay or riders taking on a single three-day stage.

To further boost the charity, the FORS Members' Conference raised over £1,000 for Transaid via delegate contributions and a FORS donation.



Caroline Barber



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Accreditation

Making the right Choice

First Choice Minibus Services was one of the first operators to gain FORS accreditation. The company's Associate Director, **Jason Thornton**, explains the benefits this has brought to the company

The Standard: When did First Choice decide to become a FORS member, and why?

Jason Thornton: In 2011, First Choice started to focus on its environmental impact and how it could develop its health and safety processes. Over time, the company joined the Energy Saving Trust, ECOSStars and SafeContractor schemes.

At that point, we felt FORS could help fine-tune our processes and develop management training and policies. The company joined as a FORS Associate in 2013 and went on to achieve FORS Bronze accreditation in 2014.

TS: Were there any significant changes necessary in order to pass the FORS Bronze audit?

JT: Management buy-in with the extra workload was the biggest hurdle when going for FORS Bronze. I think that was mainly because we were a small team and implemented too many changes alongside all the other accreditations in a relatively small space of time. By becoming a FORS Bronze member, we completely changed the whole culture of First Choice to a more professional outfit.

TS: What benefits has First Choice seen since becoming FORS accredited?

JT: Since joining FORS, we have not only grown the business, we have reduced all our insurance claims and developed strong relationships with the insurance industry. This in turn has reduced our insurance costs by 25 per cent in the last five years and included 'low claim rebates' in the last four years. This is when other operators have seen increases in their premiums.

TS: Did you need to invest in any new systems?

JT: A major part of First Choice's commitment to best practice is understanding and then finding the right technology partners to be able to implement the changes to its back office and fleet. Fortunately, I spent 15 years in the IT industry, which has helped us understand and choose the right IT partners.



Recently, First Choice developed its own driver induction training app that enables it to create and deliver unique eLearning training and policies for drivers' phones, including 'gamification' to create competition between drivers.

This is a massive cost saving to the business as the drivers are able to find time between driving duties, while still at work.

TS: How has the FORS Standard been updated for coach and bus?

JT: Over the last few years, First Choice felt that the FORS Standard was not adapting enough for the coach and bus sector, which was always part of its road map.

We invited [FORS Director] John Hix and [Operations Director] Anne Johnson to our offices to see where FORS was heading for our sector. Over the following six months, we were invited to join the FORS PCV working group, along with the Confederation of Passenger Transport, the Guild of British Coach Operators and other key operators.

Jason Thornton: happy to recommend FORS to any other operator



▶ **TS: You are also a member of the FORS Governance and Standards Advisory Group (GSAG). Why was that important to your business?**

JT: Early in 2018, we were invited to join GSAG, which we were delighted to accept. Ultimately, we decided to get involved to help support change in the coach and bus sector and I hope that we can continue to provide support for any future changes. We believe that we are a proven success story of how operators can invest in best practice and still grow their business – and be in a strong position for the future.

With the right knowledge and commitment from business owners, operators have a great chance to thrive in an ever-changing future. One of the biggest hurdles operators will face is the change in culture in both drivers and management – and that does take time.

I can only hope that our story inspires operators to look to the future and embrace change for the success of their business. FORS is always looking to evolve, so with more and more operators looking to join, they will also have an opportunity to get involved in shaping future changes.

TS: Safety has always been important to you – how has FORS helped in this respect?

JT: As I mentioned earlier, we were already working with other accreditation schemes for the environment and health and safety, but FORS really

helped First Choice to implement the right changes to its policies, processes, training and operation management structure.

TS: Why do you think FORS is important in the coach and bus sector?

JT: Competition is tight in our sector and we face many other challenges including environmental concerns and driver recruitment, so if you are unable to adapt to the future, things may not seem as bright. FORS will help you stay safe and green and ensure compliance and, in turn, you will gain a competitive edge.

TS: What are your ambitions with FORS? Do you intend to go for FORS Gold?

JT: Although we already comply with many FORS Silver and FORS Gold requirements, we had been waiting for the new FORS Standard to include PCVs before going for FORS Silver. That process is now in place. The difficult part of implementing so many changes in a short space of time, while balancing the growth of the business, is time.

TS: Would you recommend that other coach and bus operators join FORS?

JT: There are tangible benefits to joining FORS and I would be happy to recommend the scheme to any other operator. If you are serious about safety, the environment and overall productivity, then FORS has all the tools to help you succeed.

About the business

First Choice Minibus Services is a sustainable transport provider employing 47 people and offering corporate travel, business shuttles, airport/cruise transfers, school travel and other private hire services in the South East. Family owned, the business has over 24 years' experience and now owns and operates a large fleet of 16 to 40-seat bespoke vehicles, while larger coaches can be provided through its partner operators. "We believe we have a duty to our customers to demonstrate

that we operate over and above legal requirements, with a 'best practice' mindset and taking health and safety as paramount," says Jason Thornton. "Our accreditations with both FORS and the SafeContractor scheme provide visible evidence of our responsibilities.

"Due to the nature of our business, we have a responsibility in reducing our carbon footprint and, in turn, supporting our customers' environmental and CSR policies," he adds. "We are committed to reducing emissions and that's a fundamental FORS requirement."



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Curtailing the terror threat

What operators can do to help keep their staff and operations safe.

By Richard Simpson

“

Vehicle-related threats are potent, not least because they can be mounted by so-called 'lone actors' with little or nothing in the way of external support

”

The official terror threat to Great Britain has recently been downgraded from 'severe' to 'substantial'. However, local considerations mean it is still 'severe' in Northern Ireland – and the attacks by Turkey on the Kurds have also liberated an unknown number of fighters, some of whom will no doubt be keen to come to the UK and carry on here.

So, this is no time for complacency – and transport operators have a role to play in ensuring that their trucks and vans are not used in 'vehicle as weapon' attacks, like those which occurred in the UK in 2017 and killed 14 people.

Scale of the problem

Currently, the police have about 800 live investigations into terrorist plots – up from 600 in 2017 – and in the last two years 22 attacks have been stopped.

Not all those have come from radical Islam: seven were from the extreme right in British politics, which is now the fastest-growing source of threat, according to a Metropolitan Police source.

Vehicle-related threats are potent, not least because they can be mounted by so-called 'lone actors' with little or nothing in the way of external support. All that is required is a target and the control of a large enough vehicle to seriously damage life and property.

The FORS approach

FORS-accredited organisations must have a policy and procedures in place to safeguard against



terrorism. Threats must be recognised, so operators can identify their vulnerabilities. Security measures and procedures must be implemented to protect these vulnerabilities and supporting documentation produced, including risk assessments and method statements, plus continuity plans to follow during an incident.

Simple precautions

Guarding against vehicles being taken away by unauthorised people is probably the single most effective measure. It's tempting to keep vehicle keys hanging on an easily-accessible board with each registration number clearly visible in an office or workshop, but that is also an open invitation to 'borrow' a truck or van.

Drivers also need to be reminded not to leave keys in the ignition, or exposed where they can be taken by passers-by while on the roadside. Night-out

drivers should trust their instincts. The truck driver who was hijacked and murdered as a precursor to the 2016 attack on the Berlin Christmas market which left 12 people dead and 56 injured, had called his wife in Poland the night before to say that the place he had parked in did not feel safe.

It is perfectly legal, under EU tachograph and hours laws, for a driver to interrupt a rest or break to move a vehicle to safety in the event of a threat to the vehicle, its load or its occupants. The reason for doing so should be recorded on the back of the tacho print-out or chart.

Want to know more?

For more information, two FORS-approved providers offer counter-terrorism training: Fleet Source Training Team (0345 600 4045) and The Resources Group (0870 7704112). In addition, FORS members can download the FORS

Counter Terrorism Toolkit from the FORS website. For a list of all the toolkits, go to: www.fors-online.org.uk/cms/toolkits/

States of alert

There are five 'states of alert' issued by the UK Government, ranging from 'Critical' (an attack is imminent) to 'Low' (an attack is unlikely). The current state in Great Britain is 'Substantial' (an attack is a strong possibility) and in Northern Ireland, 'Severe' (an attack is highly likely).

Stowaways

International operators should be aware that tight security at short Channel-crossing points in France has spread the stowaway threat in both directions along the French and Belgian coasts. Additionally, smugglers are now targeting British and Irish-registered vehicles much further inland. Drivers of homebound trucks need to be more alert than ever to the danger of unwelcome passengers.

Michelin explains five-step process to help fleets maintain best standards

At a time when a business's approach to health & safety, sustainability and the environment are under the microscope like never before, looking after your tyres should be riding high on any fleet operator's list of priorities. At the FORS Members Conference, Michelin offered some sage advice on how best to get the most from your rubber



◀ Edwin Farquhar, Michelin Services & Solutions Key Account Manager, addresses the audience at the 2019 FORS Members Conference

▼ Michelin encourages all operators to carry out regular tyre checks and inspections

A good tyre management policy is imperative for operators looking to run a safer, smarter and greener fleet. That was the overriding message from an engaging and in-depth presentation from Michelin Services & Solutions Key Account Manager Edwin Farquhar at the 2019 FORS Members Conference.

More than 500 FORS members listened intently at the National Conference Centre, in Birmingham, as Farquhar outlined the procedures and techniques Michelin uses to manage the tyres of more than 900,000 commercial vehicles around the world.

"It's important to remember tyres are the only part of the vehicle that actually touch the road, so clearly you need to make sure you take care of them," he told the packed auditorium.

"You can actually learn a lot from how people and businesses look after their tyres. Generally speaking, I've found if an operator takes good care of their tyres, they are more likely to look after the rest of their business as well. It is almost a reflection of how a company will maintain and care for their whole operation."

Michelin has been providing tyre management solutions in the UK since the 1920s. In the early days, the majority of its customers were bus and coach fleets. The bulk of the work would be handled by a resident, professional tyre technician based at the customer's depots, who would look after the fitting of all new tyres, carry out regular inspections and diagnose and resolve any issues before logging the work.

The increasing popularity of 'outsourcing' in the 1990s brought freight transport operators to Michelin's attention, which added a complexity to the way they approached tyre management.

"The company had to adapt its work to a larger scale – developing nationwide, multiple stakeholder, product and service delivery networks. Rolling out, policing and

reporting on the veracity of our customers' tyre policies across multiple touch points," explained Farquhar.

Different businesses require different solutions

Michelin now employs a global workforce of roughly 1,000 people within its Services & Solutions division, whose sole focus is to design, develop and deploy mobility solutions to ensure its customers get the absolute maximum performance from their tyres.

While the systems and technologies are more complex than before, the focus remains very much the same.

"Today, we are all able to call on all of our practical experiences to create tyre management solutions as unique as our customers. However, the principle behind our actions and our intentions hasn't changed," said Farquhar. "The emphasis remains, as it has always been, on getting the best results for our customers."

"Through our services and solutions, we can help each individual business get the maximum from their tyres and improve their efficiency, productivity, compliance and environmental footprint along the way. But there is nothing magical or mythical about what we do. The procedures and techniques we employ can be rolled out across any business."

A straightforward approach, delivering outstanding results

Farquhar went on to explain Michelin uses an easy-to-understand, five-step process to help ensure its customers maintain their tyres in the best shape possible.

"First and foremost, it's important to formalise your tyre policy," he said. "Creating a detailed policy will help you get to grips with all aspects of tyre management. Clearly identify your aims and objectives and what you expect to achieve. Then share the information with anyone involved in the process. Don't keep it to yourself."

Next, Michelin always advises its customers to appoint a "tyre champion" to help facilitate the adoption of the policy, to consolidate and vet feedback and help to create credibility.

"The champion's value lies partly in the time spent using the product but just as important is the value of their experience with and within the process you are trying to implement or improve," said Farquhar.

Third on the list, and a vitally important step, is what Michelin call "getting to know your tyres".

"It's estimated that 85 per cent of roadworthiness infringements could be avoided if the driver does a thorough walk around check before each journey," said Farquhar. "Regular checks and inspections are so important. The key points to focus on when you're looking at your tyres are the remaining tread depth, checking your pressures and any visible signs of wear or distress."

Scheduled tyre maintenance is another process Michelin actively encourages. Farquhar urged the audience to always make sure their vehicles are available for booked appointments "as proactive and preventative maintenance has proven to lower operators' costs by catching small service issues before they develop into giant repair headaches".

Lastly, but certainly not least, the FORS members were told to seek Michelin's expert advice if in any doubt the policy they have in place is not achieving the desired results.

"We are always happy to have that conversation," he said. "Asking an expert is crucial and, in my opinion, if that advice isn't free, it isn't really advice. We want to help the best operators, deliver the best possible standards and are always there to support and offer our technical expertise for other FORS members."



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Going walkabout for safety's sake

Drivers' eyes and ears are the operator's first line of defence against roadworthiness prosecutions. Modern technology offers ways of ensuring that faults are found and rectified. **By Richard Simpson**

“

Some drivers will be exceptionally conscientious, others will act as though they could not care less. The vast majority will fall somewhere between the two extremes”

Driver's daily walkaround checks can prevent road incidents caused by mechanical defects and prosecutions of operators and drivers for Construction and Use offences. As such, they have a key role to play in maintaining a clean collision and incident history and legal good repute.

But managing them is a difficult task. Some drivers will be exceptionally conscientious, others will act as though they could not care less. The vast majority will fall somewhere between the two extremes – they probably will check everything, but not as thoroughly as they might and not every day.

This lack of thoroughness is perfectly understandable – who wants to poke about under a truck that has been parked up over a puddle all night on a dark winter's morning? If it was all right yesterday, then it will probably be all right today.

Even if the checks are properly done, there are other problems. Most of these centre around capturing, storing and processing the resultant data. The DVSA's *Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness* is clear. It says: "Daily defect checks are vital and the results of such checks must be recorded as part of the maintenance system. There must be a system of reporting and recording defects that may affect the roadworthiness of the vehicle. This must include how they were rectified before the vehicle is used."

Maintaining records

If daily checks are correctly completed and the faults found rectified, then a big problem for even the compliant operator is in maintaining the record. The sheer amount of paper generated by even a small fleet can be daunting and the environments in which it is produced and processed (in yards, parking

places and workshops) are not conducive to the maintenance of clean and clear records.

It must be remembered that the recording of a fault by a driver is not the end of the process – it is just the beginning. Evidence also needs to be produced and retained of how it was dealt with, and by whom, and what steps were taken to stop it recurring.

On a practical note, what should happen to

a defect book in which checks and faults are recorded? Should each book be assigned to a driver, or a vehicle? At what point are the books, or duplicate sheets from the books, handed to the office and how are they then used to generate job cards for the workshop?

When a vehicle has been away for a few days, how can the operator be sure that the checks really

have been conducted at the start of each shift? Perhaps that suspiciously immaculate set of defect sheets was created in a layby just down the road from the yard on Friday afternoon.

It can all get very complicated, very quickly. Fortunately, a solution is now, quite literally, to hand. Almost every driver now carries a smartphone as a matter of routine and various proprietary apps

The drivers' check is the first line of defence against roadside defects





are available which the driver can use to carry out the daily check in an orderly fashion, with date and time recorded. Each check can then be sent directly back to the traffic office, no matter where the vehicle is actually located. If the driver is unsure about the condition of an item (damage to a tyre or a chip in a windscreen, for instance) then it can be photographed and a second opinion sought from the transport manager or fleet engineer.

The app will 'walk the driver through' the various items which need to be checked around the vehicle, making it more difficult for things to be forgotten or overlooked.

A good daily check app should also be compatible with workshop management systems 'downstream' of the driver. A fault requiring workshop attention, for instance, should flag up the need to get a slot in the workshop booked and work scheduled so that the vehicle can be taken off the road for repair.

Total control

Lucketts Coaches uses an app developed by Distinctive Systems specifically for the coach industry as part of an overall vehicle management system (VMS) that also controls vehicle bookings and availability. Initially, it introduced the VMS in the workshop, with technicians using tablets to record periodic inspections in the company's own workshop. This was highly successful, so the company extended the process to daily checks, with drivers using smartphones. Integrating the daily check into the wider system was vital, according to company director Ian Lockett: "We could have gone to a stand-alone system like this earlier," he recounts.

"But we didn't want to do it until it could be electronically integrated into our existing VMS, otherwise you can find that faults are getting fixed before they are entered into the system.

"The whole point of these systems is to cut out wasteful processes. Now, when a driver does a



walkaround with a device, any defects they record are entered straight onto the system automatically. That even happens when the vehicle is away on a tour. Not only does this enable better planning of workshop time and space, there is no need to scan or file inspection sheets so the manpower saving is immense.

"We did a trial, which exposed a few issues. Then we did a pre-launch with selected drivers and it was generally very well received by them. For instance, if there's a small crack in a windscreen, they can photograph it and we can advise them on the next action. We can also be sure that timely checks are

being done while vehicles are away."

Checkedsafe is among the providers offering a daily check app to truck operators as part of a suite of compliance solutions.

It offers over 150 different vehicle templates to suit various truck types, including different axle plans, bodies and trailers.

Once the check is complete, the report is sent and becomes viewable on the Checkedsafe Compliance Management System (CMS), with failed checks automatically generating a report

which can be sent to the relevant manager.

All recorded data is stored on the CMS suite and can be downloaded as a PDF or in Excel for further analysis.

If the check is conducted in an area which is 'out of signal' then the data is stored on the driver's device (which can be Apple or Android, tablet or phone) until transmission is possible. The mobile device's motion sensors also monitor the driver's movement, just in case he or she is tempted to conduct the check entirely from the cab!

Systems such as Truckfile (illustrated here) integrate the drivers' checks with the workshop management system

Managing daily checks to DVSA's standards

DVSA will expect to see a period of 'other work' for daily checks recorded on the tachograph before a vehicle is driven. Contrary to rumour, there is no set time for this – DVSA accepts that a driver will take longer to check over an unfamiliar vehicle and an artic and trailer will take longer to check than a 7.5-tonne box van.

Drivers should feel empowered to record check results honestly and call up faults without being intimidated into taking the vehicle out.

Phrases such as 'you won't get stopped'

or 'is it important?' should not be used if a driver reports a an item of potential roadworthiness.

Faults found at the roadside can have a serious impact on the company's Operator Compliance Risk Score (OCRS) rating. Driver checks can be audited by using PMI reports.

If a PMI picks up faults which should have been apparent to the driver, but were not recorded at the last daily check, then the chances are that something is going wrong. If an operator is before the Traffic

Commissioner with faults arising from sloppy daily checks as an issue, then the Traffic Commissioner will have done just this.

If it is suspected that a driver is skipping checks, an old dodge is to remove a brake-light bulb from his vehicle before his shift starts, then stop the vehicle at the gate and tell the driver he has a brake light out. If he responds that it must 'just have gone,' you can produce the bulb as evidence that it's gone missing rather than gone pop!

LEFT: Checkedsafe can be used on a wide variety of phones and devices



“When a driver does a walk-around with a device, any defects they record are entered straight onto the system automatically”

Recruit from within

The continued national shortage of drivers is prompting some FORS members to start generating their own truckers.

Steve Banner investigates

The transport sector has struggled with a lack of commercial vehicle drivers for some time. The situation is now at a critical level, which means that operators are looking for solutions – and many are casting the net wider for potential solutions to the problem.

For many companies, the scenario has led to them looking closer to home. A business that employs van drivers or forklift truck operators can offer drivers the option of graduating to something bigger – and potentially earn a better wage.

Employers are often worried that if they pay for the training required to obtain a truck licence, then the employee will repay them by leaving and getting a job elsewhere. But if the wages and working conditions they are offering are decent, the individual is more likely to remain than to go – and firms can always come to an agreement under which newly-qualified truckers commit to repaying all or part of the cost of their training if they depart within, say, two years of passing their test.

The requirements

Anybody who wants to become a truck driver has to hold a car licence and be over the age of 18. Their first task is to apply for a provisional lorry licence, which involves obtaining forms D2 and D4 from the Driver and Vehicle Licence Agency (DVLA). Visit: forms.dft.gov.uk/order-dvla-forms for details. D4 will have to be completed by a doctor, usually either a GP or somebody from a private firm specialising in driver medical exams, although an optician may need to fill in the eyesight section. Be aware that all three can charge for their services.

Once the forms are completed, the applicant should send them off to the DVLA, along with

their photocard car driving licence. If they have an old-style paper licence, then they should include a passport-size colour photo and original identity documents (visit: www.gov.uk/driving-licence-application-identity-documents for further information).

The provisional licence should arrive three weeks later, unless the DVLA raises any queries about the application.

Testing times

The next step is to take the part one driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) theory test. The trainee can book a test slot at a test centre the minute the licence arrives.

The theory test is made up of two elements – multiple choice and hazard perception. Each part is booked separately, but can be taken on the same day. The multiple choice test has a pass mark of 85

out of 100 questions. The hazard perception test involves watching 19 videos showing 20 unfolding dangers that have to be spotted, with a pass mark of 67 out of 100.

Part two of the CPC theory test consists of seven case studies that have to be worked through on the computer. They are short stories based on situations candidates could come across during their working lives, and the examinee is asked between six and eight multiple-choice questions about each of them. The pass mark is 40 out of 50.

From warehouse to wheels

Andy Leonard is familiar with the challenge of taking a van- or forklift- driving company employee who has never sat behind the wheel of a truck before and getting them through their test. "It's sometimes referred to as 'warehouse to wheels'," he says.

A director of Hull-based All Training, Leonard has driven trucks for the past 35 years. On the FORS list of approved training providers, All Training is one of a number of organisations licensed to deliver FORS Professional TruckSmart driver training.

It is a seven-hour course, which focuses on the importance of driving roadworthy trucks and the role of the driver in ensuring that vehicles and loads are safe and legal at all times.

"As far as learning to drive a truck is concerned, the theory tests are not that difficult once you've got your head around them," he observes. "We direct drivers to a site called Driving Theory 4 All (www.drivingtheory4all.co.uk) so they can practice."

Once candidates have passed both parts, their theory test certificates are posted to them. The certificate has to be produced when the driving test is booked.

So how does he set about the hands-on out-on-

Anybody who wants to become a truck driver has to hold a car licence and be over the age of 18





Potential drivers are shown what to look for on a walk around check

the-highway practicalities of teaching a novice to drive a truck? And how long does it take?

"Five-and-a-half days including taking the test – and we begin with the daily walkaround check," Leonard replies.

"We show them what to look for and why they need to look for it," he adds. "It

has to be more than just a box-ticking exercise."

Trainees can then carry out the check first thing themselves on each of the following days under the watchful eye of an instructor.

The instructor carries out a demonstration drive to give the pupil an idea of how a truck should be driven, then drives to a quiet location and lets the pupil take the wheel.

The next five days will see the truck enter busier and busier areas of town as the trainee gains confidence under the instructor's tutelage.

A class above

The learner will be looking to obtain a Category C licence, sometimes incorrectly referred to as a Class 2 licence. It entitles the holder to drive rigid goods vehicles. Once drivers have gained Category C, they can progress to Category C+E (also incorrectly known as Class 1). This permits the holder to drive an artic or drawbar combination. It involves a separate test – trainee truck drivers can no longer go straight to C+E as they were able to in the past.

"We use an 18-tonner for Category C training and a 40-tonner for Category C+E," says Leonard. "We get quite a few going for their C+E once they've passed their C."

All Training's licence programmes both cost well over £900.

Expensive, but for drivers who pay for the training themselves, the initial outlay could be worthwhile, given the potential future earnings.

As far as novice drivers are concerned, instructors expect them to demonstrate that they are in full control of their vehicle, says Leonard. "We're looking

for them to be observant. We expect them to keep checking their mirrors, especially when they are turning left or right – and to be aware that there may be something sitting in the vehicle's blind spot.

"We also expect them to watch their speed," Leonard continues.

"Some drivers go a bit too fast and need to be reined in, while others don't go fast enough and may be viewed as making insufficient progress.

"We sometimes find that people are a bit frightened of the truck," he remarks.

Road sense is essential

Lane discipline can be an issue too. "Not being in the correct lane when you are entering and leaving a roundabout can be a real problem," says Leonard. "You may be able to get away with it in a car, but not if you are in something as big as an 18-tonner."

One technological development in recent years that he welcomes is the shift away from manual transmissions in favour of automated boxes.

"It makes things a lot safer than they were in the old days of splitter boxes and range changes because you no longer have to worry about which gear you should be in," he says.

"Instead, you can concentrate on the road ahead and what's around you. That means vulnerable road users are less at risk."

Some 87 per cent of All Training's Category C candidates pass their test, he says, and the company has an area off the public highway where they can practice reversing. Mess up reversing and you could be failed by the driving examiner.

"One of our trainees was failed recently because he took three shunts instead of two, even though the truck only moved around two feet on the third occasion," remarks Leonard.

Even if individuals have passed their on-the-road test, they still have one more hurdle to jump – a practical demonstration covering five topics, including how to load a truck safely.

Examinees have to score at least 15 out of 20 in each topic area and achieve an overall score of at least 80 out of 100.

Having leapt over this final hurdle, the driver will be sent a driver CPC card. It will have to be renewed every five years, which will involve taking 35 hours of CPC training prior to the renewal date.

The entire process is undoubtedly a demanding one, but will hopefully result in the creation of a knowledgeable body of drivers able to take on the challenges of today's congested highways – something FORS members can only welcome.

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Industry standards

Bringing FORS closer to the transport industry, the Governance and Standards Advisory Group has helped make a real difference, says Chairman Steve Agg. But there is more work to be done, he tells **Steve Banner**

Organisations such as FORS need to be credible in the eyes of the industry they serve. Ensuring such credibility is one of the key roles of GSAG – the FORS Governance and Standards Advisory Group, chaired by Steve Agg.

Playing no part in the day-to-day running of FORS, the group can take a step back from the organisation and provide an objective view of the direction it is heading in, giving advice and guidance.

“GSAG dates back around five years to the time when FORS was being let as a concession by Transport for London (TfL),” Agg says. “The concession went to a partnership made up of AECOM, the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT), and Fleet Source. It became known as the FORS Community Partnership (FCP).”

From small beginnings

GSAG’s creation gave FCP greater weight as it began to promote the benefits of FORS to businesses outside London. “FORS wanted to spread the word more widely and show that it was not just for operators in and around the capital,” explains Agg. “GSAG is made up of a number of operators with a commitment to FORS as well as representatives from industry bodies,” Agg continues.

The operators he mentions include FM Conway, DHL, O’Donovan Waste Disposal and UPS. “They are involved not because they have to be, but because they want to be,” he observes.

GSAG’s membership offers a broad spectrum of expertise and knowledge.

Industry bodies involved include Construction Logistics and Community Safety (CLOCS), the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) and the Institute of Couriers (IoC) as well as the Driver

and Vehicle Standards Agency, Highways England and Transport for Greater Manchester.

TfL, AECOM, Fleet Source and CILT are represented too. In fact, Agg used to be CILT’s chief executive and has worked in the transport industry for over 50 years.

The involvement of the CPT and the IoC underscores the fact that FORS membership is not just for truck operators. Bus and coach fleets and van fleets – indeed vehicle fleets of all types – can join too and can get involved with GSAG.

Widening the net

Current GSAG members include First Choice Minibus Services. “It’s worth remembering that although we started out as the Freight Operator Recognition Scheme, we changed our name to the Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme because we had a wider remit in mind,” Agg says.

One of GSAG’s key roles is to be a technically competent body that oversees the ongoing development of the FORS Standard, which is revised every two years. It recommends changes, improvements and additions to the scheme where appropriate and ensures that the Standard is compatible with all relevant legislation and remains relevant to the transport industry. “We have several sub-groups that address various vitally important topics, then report back to us,” Agg says. “We meet three times a year.”

Safety is a key topic and FORS has pursued a number of initiatives with the aim of providing both drivers and vulnerable road users with better protection. “I’m thinking in particular of the stress we have placed on better vision from truck cabs and the use of onboard sensors, cameras and other safety-related add-ons, especially in urban areas,” says Agg.

Another topic is how best FORS members can reduce emissions from their vehicles. “That’s a major issue and one that’s becoming more important in both urban and rural areas,” he observes.

Help from above

GSAG aims to establish general principles rather than insisting that all operators should for example immediately switch to zero-emission electric vans and trucks for all of their activities. “Our job is not to

make life so difficult for members that it becomes impossible for them to operate,” Agg remarks.

The group also provides representatives to an independent panel which hears appeals from FORS members who have had compliance and enforcement action taken against them by FORS. Such action could in some cases ultimately lead to their suspension or even termination.

Agg is acutely aware of the heavy criticism FORS received in the transport press a few years ago.

“Back then we were on a very steep learning curve and there were certainly times where we didn’t act quickly enough,” he admits.

But things have changed in more recent times, he insists.

There have been no recent instances of members falling foul of Traffic Commissioners without FORS being aware of the situation and taking appropriate action, he states. That does not mean that operators who run into difficulties are instantly shown the door, however.

“We’re not about slapping people down and if a member is clearly struggling, then we will assist them if we can,” Agg says. “Remember that FORS is all about helping fleets achieve a standard that is higher than the bare minimum that is required in order to enter the industry.”

Looking ahead

The most recent GSAG meeting to be held at the time of writing provided a useful insight into its activities and priorities. The main topic of conversation centred around the development of driver training for FORS Silver accredited operators as GSAG looked ahead to Version 6 of the Standard due in 2021.

Another issue raised was the degree to which drivers are switching off audible warning alarms linked to VRU (Vulnerable Road User) sensors –

something that FORS should investigate as soon as possible, says GSAG. A working group is being set up that will look into this problem and see what can be done about it.

GSAG also listened to a thought-provoking presentation about workplace well-being from mental health charity and FORS Associate Mates In Mind. A growing number of businesses are encouraging employees to be more open about any mental health problems they may have and adopting measures to address them.

GSAG does everything it can to promote FORS and Agg believes that membership can be commercially beneficial for fleets.

“If you are looking for somebody to deliver your products then you want the best you can get,” he observes.

“That has to be a FORS member rather than somebody who only meets minimum requirements, and we do all we can to encourage businesses to use FORS accredited operators.”



Steve Agg

Joining GSAG

Any FORS member or stakeholder organisation wishing to join GSAG should contact FORS Governance and Standards Manager, James Tillyer (james.tillyer@ciltuk.org.uk) to apply, giving reasons why they want to be considered. He will respond in writing, provide details of how to apply and FCP will decide whether the application should be approved or not once it has been

received. In doing so, FCP will consider: whether the applicant represents a sector or vehicle type under-represented within GSAG; if there is any potential conflict of interest; if the applicant will provide GSAG with added value or if GSAG would remain effective and manageable if the applicant were to join.

FCP is especially interested in hearing from bus and coach fleets, van fleets, local authorities, retailers and small firms

with five vehicles or less that would like to become part of GSAG.

CILT will write to the business or organisation with FCP’s decision and the reasoning that underpins it within 28 days of receiving the application. If the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome then they can ask for a more detailed explanation or request that GSAG considers the application independently.

GSAG’s decision is final.

Dressed for success

Whether it's to stay safe or be seen on site, the right clothing can make a big difference. **By Steve Banner**

Working in the road transport industry means staff are periodically exposed to the danger of physical injury. Use a pressure washer to clean a filthy trailer and they could end up being hit in the eye with a large lump of dirt peppered with stones. Unload a 205-litre drum of lubricant and there is always the risk that it will accidentally be dropped, causing a foot injury.

Personnel protective equipment could help mitigate the risk of injury in both cases.

Put on a pair of goggles prior to firing up the washer, and a worker's precious eyesight should be protected. Don a pair of boots with steel toe-caps and it is less likely that feet will be harmed if something falls on them.

The above scenario assumes that such items are readily available in the workplace – and that's because they have to be. Employers have an obligation to provide them under the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992, as amended.

Separate and more-specific regulations apply to the provision of hearing protection and respirators, should they be required.

Risk management

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) says that to ensure the right protective equipment is chosen, employers must first carry out a risk assessment and identify the hazards their workers may face.

As well as goggles and hefty boots, staff may need waterproof overalls, thick gloves and protective headgear if they are working outside in a haulier's yard. They will certainly require high-visibility clothing so that truck drivers, shunters and forklift operators can see them.

If company managers are not sure which items they should acquire, then they should seek advice from equipment manufacturers, specialist suppliers or safety consultants. The British Safety Industry Federation (www.bsif.co.uk) is another potential

source of information. All products acquired should be assessed to ensure they are fit for purpose.

The HSE makes the point that eye protection designed to prevent injuries to an agricultural worker caused by pesticides may not be of much help to a technician using an angle grinder in a workshop.

Material choice

There is also the point that the law of unintended consequences can apply. Some types of equipment can potentially add new risks, which will need to be addressed. It may make communicating with fellow workers more problematic, for example, and that could cause difficulties in a busy distribution depot.

It can also make the job more challenging to do because it is heavy and awkward to put on.

That could mean that both the task and the equipment provided will need to be reassessed, especially if the item has to be worn for an extended period.

It is also worth noting that items need to be compatible with one another. It may, for example, be difficult to fit eye protection if you are wearing a respirator, says the HSE. Employers would do well to let their employees help choose the products they are going to be using. Get their buy-in and they are more likely to wear them.

When choosing products, it is vitally important to take into account the size, fit and weight of each item and any pre-existing health issues individuals may have which render standard protective equipment unsuitable. If that is the case, then an alternative will have to be considered.

If an item does not fit an individual, then it must be capable of being adjusted until it does.

Taking care with clothes

Managers should ensure that people are trained in the use of protective equipment, says the HSE – shown how to remove gloves without contaminating their skin, for instance. They should also make a



point of explaining to staff when it should be used and why it is necessary. Any limitations should also be stressed – even the best-designed products will not protect somebody who decides to do something foolish.

Another factor to bear in mind is that the items provided should be used whenever necessary and that jobs that will only take a few minutes are not exempt from this requirement. Supervisors should ensure that this obligation is complied with, no matter how inconvenient it might be.

Somebody can lose an eye or suffer severe burns in a matter of seconds if what appears to be a routine job goes badly wrong.

Regular checks should be made to ensure that whatever has been provided is being used and incidents that have occurred when it has not been employed should be thoroughly investigated. Safety signs that remind staff of its importance should be put up around the workplace.

Skin care

Hand protection is sometimes neglected and

suppliers such as Jennychem offer a wide selection of gloves, including heavy-duty rigger gloves and gauntlets. Jennychem can supply a variety of other items including protective boots, weatherproof clothing, first aid kits and a comprehensive hazchem kit which can be carried on vehicles transporting hazardous goods.

The kit includes everything from an eyewash bottle and a rubber safety torch to gloves and goggles.

The HSE makes the point that using gloves when operating bench drills is inadvisable because they may get caught up in the drill and that some materials used to make gloves can be penetrated quickly by chemicals.

Visit its skin-at-work website (www.hse.gov.uk/skin) for more details.

Returning to boots, anybody who has to visit construction sites, landfills or quarries, should ensure their footwear has soles which can resist penetration by sharp objects.

The soles should also be designed to help prevent slips, so take a careful look at the tread pattern and the material they are made from.



Protective equipment must be kept in good repair, says the HSE, maintained in line with the manufacturer's recommendations and properly stored when not in use.

There should be a reporting procedure so that employees can inform management of any defects or losses – and anything that is damaged beyond repair should be disposed of and replaced.

If the nature of the job being undertaken changes, then the equipment may have to be changed. Otherwise it may end up offering the user inadequate protection.

External obligations

Check that contractors coming onto your site have the correct protective equipment and ensure that

items such as high-visibility jackets are ready to hand for visitors to wear.

An employer cannot charge an employee for any protective workwear that has been provided, says the HSE. "If employment has been terminated, however, and the employee keeps it without the employer's permission, then, as long as it has been made clear in the contract of employment, the employer may be able to deduct the cost of the replacement from any wages owed," the HSE advises.

Even if all the aforementioned measures are taken, somebody may still suffer harm. The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 oblige businesses to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel to ensure their employees receive prompt attention if they are hurt or become ill at work. It should be noted that they apply to workplaces of all sizes and to the self-employed.

"What is 'adequate and appropriate' will depend on the circumstances in the workplace," says the HSE. "This includes whether trained first-aiders are needed, what should be included in a first-aid box and if a first-aid room is required. Employers should carry out an assessment of first-aid needs to determine what to provide."

A number of organisations run first aid courses. They include the British Red Cross whose website – www.redcross.org.uk – provides practical advice on how to deal with a medical emergency. It's advice that could prove invaluable if someone is hurt at work.



“What is ‘adequate and appropriate’ will depend on the circumstances in the workplace”



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Handle with care

Drivers need to look after themselves behind the wheel, but also protect their cargo. **Richard Simpson** advises on how to best load and unload vehicles

Safety precautions in the loading process can often be contradictory. At the most basic level, the driver is responsible for checking the load is placed correctly and securely, but this may entail climbing onto the vehicle and even the load itself, which is dangerous!

Similarly, mechanised aids such as forklifts, taillifts and cranes all reduce the risks of manual handling and the need to clamber onto vehicles, but pose

considerable dangers to the unwary bystander.

There is also the ever-present danger of objects falling from height, which is exacerbated by mechanical lifting.

As with all routine tasks, it is also very easy for corners to be cut as time passes and a culture of complacency develops. Unless a 'safety first' culture is actively maintained, it's all too easy for training and rules to be informally modified as time passes on the basis of 'monkey see, monkey do'.

Duty of care

Employers and managers have a duty to actively maintain and encourage a safety culture and empower staff to be able to report dangers and incidents without fear of repercussion or ridicule. With the Health & Safety Executive always ready

to come in and investigate incidents (at the employer's expense) and then pursue cases through the criminal courts, the job that is saved may be your own!

Providing adequate information, instruction, supervision and equipment for the job in hand is vital.

Loading at the dispatch point is usually more easily controlled than unloading at the point of delivery, but there are dangers in both. Loads that have shifted in transit can pose a hazard on unloading. We know of one instance where a driver pulled back a bulging curtain against the advice of the forklift operator on site and was killed instantly when a stack of roofing sheets fell on him. Again, drivers need to be trained to assess the possible dangers of a shifted load and know what action to take.

Where incidents happen

Collisions between forklift trucks and pedestrians are a common cause of workplace accidents.

Some health and safety professionals suggest that one factor here is familiarity: forklifts are a day-to-day sight in most yards and warehouses and they are not of particularly threatening appearance. Electric trucks, in particular, are almost silent in operation.

Yet forklifts top the table of types involved in the 5,000-plus collisions a year that take place between pedestrians and vehicles in the workplace.

The obvious mitigation is to keep people and forklift trucks physically separated so far as is possible.

Virtually all types of load, from bulk materials to palletised items pose some kind of hazard. There is no one-size fits all solution for all transport operations but there is a legal obligation to introduce whatever safety measures are 'reasonably practicable'.

Possible dangers must be identified and acted upon. Wise operators will engage the services of qualified independent person to undertake initial and periodic assessments of these risks.

Underlying these diverse requirements are some basic principles: segregation – keep people and moving vehicles apart; visibility – make sure hazards can be seen and identified and humans in vulnerable positions should wear hi-viz; speed – should be kept down; layout – minimise the need for reversing, and reduce conflict between vehicles travelling in different directions and different vehicle types: ie trucks, material-handlers and cars.

“As with all routine tasks, it is very easy for corners to be cut as time passes and a culture of complacency develops”



Five case studies highlighting a lack of loading care

1) Load slipped

The case

An agency driver was seriously injured when he was struck by a paper reel that fell from a fork-lift truck as he was assisting in the loading of his trailer.

The reel slipped from a clamp attachment fitted to the fork-lift and struck his lower body and legs. He sustained multiple fractures.

The cause

Drivers regularly assisted with loading operations, standing on the trailer and holding back curtains and strapping reels in place during loading.

The lesson

The company should have had a safe system in place to ensure that pedestrians were kept away from moving vehicles and potentially falling loads. The company was fined £30,000 + £7,305.16 costs.

2) Pump blocked

The case

A worker at a construction site was killed and another injured when the delivery pipe from a truck-mounted concrete pump became blocked during a discharge operation. When the blockage suddenly cleared, the flexible pipe whipped round.

The cause

Workers were too close to the delivery equipment during the pumping operation.

The lesson

There was a failure to manage the safety of the pumping operation. The exclusion zone around the delivery nozzle was not enforced. Sub-contractors had not been informed or instructed about the dangers of the operation, supervision was inadequate and the pumping operation was not monitored to ensure the safety of workers. The concrete company was fined £15,000 + £13,883.60 costs.

3) Dangerous modification

The case

A fork-lift truck driver was seriously injured when a 700 kg air-freight container fell on him when he was unloading it from a truck. He was trapped between the container and a concrete pedestrian barrier.

The cause

The fork-lift had been modified to make it easier to

pick air-freight containers off the ground and there was no stabilisation system. There was no 'safe system' to identify the risk of containers falling.

The lesson

Passing sentence, the judge described the company's lifting operations as "dangerous practice" saying it presented a "significant risk not only to the operator of the forklift, but to any member of staff who happened to be in the vicinity."

The company was fined £82,000 + £6,575.60 costs and £170 victim surcharge.

4) Danger overhead

The case

The driver of a grab lorry was killed when the lorry crane arm hit an on-site overhead powerline during unloading operations.

The cause

The site operator had identified the risk posed by the overhead powerlines but had failed to implement any mitigation plan, organise work around the hazard, or train employees about it.

The lesson

There was a failure to implement safe systems of work and to ensure that health and safety documentation was communicated and followed on site. The company was fined £400,000 + £17,242.33 costs.

5) Assumed knowledge

The case

An agency driver on his first day of multi-drop deliveries was seriously injured when he fell from a raised tail-lift while moving a pallet loaded with 12 beer kegs.

The cause

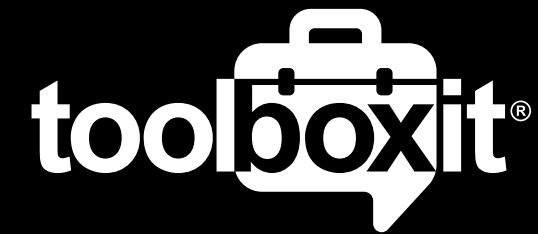
The driver had no training or experience on the type of tail-lift and pallet-truck used by the company. He was unaware of safe practices or the procedure for safely using the pallet-truck on the tail-lift.

The lesson

The transport company had not checked the driver's competence or previous experience, and so failed to provide adequate training. It was fined £60,000 + £7,203.14 costs.

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Operator profile

LCVH: hire and higher

As a recent accredited FORS Silver Vehicle Hire Provider, LCVH has shown best practice is the way to the top. **By Steve Banner**

Few van and truck rental companies have their headquarters in a Grade II* listed building that has links with the transport industry stretching back over 170 years. LC Vehicle Hire (LCVH), however, is based in a Victorian railway roundhouse in Leeds that was first used by steam engines in 1847 and has a blue plaque highlighting its history. But LCVH did not start out there. The firm was founded in 1957 by Geoff Miller as Carsapoint, hiring out cars and Lambretta scooters from the garage of the Grand Hotel in Harrogate.

By 1967, LCVH had moved to premises in Chapeltown Road in Leeds and took over the roundhouse in 1969. Still a family-run business – Geoff's son Chris is Managing Director – LCVH has just achieved FORS Silver Vehicle Hire accreditation.

Best practice benefits

A new accreditation, it gives the firm's customers assurance that the vehicles they are hiring meet their own best-practice standards. It demonstrates that they meet the FORS Silver requirements and that all necessary safety equipment is fitted.

"We've achieved FORS Silver at all six of our depots," says Sales Director, Paul Bumford. "We've invested a lot of money in areas such as maintenance and health and safety because we take the view that we want to be ahead of standards rather than constantly chasing them."

With a 2,000-strong fleet, 160 employees and a £35m annual turnover, LCVH operates out of Bradford, Sherburn-in-Elmet in North Yorkshire, Barnsley, Manchester, Bristol and Leeds. "The next depot we open will be in either Birmingham or Scotland," says Bumford.

Fleet expansion

Six years ago, the company acquired Shawhire, the rental division of body builder Shawtrack. As



a result, the LCVH fleet now embraces 800 vans and 1,200 trucks as well as 30 low-loader trailers that can transport plant. Its key customers are construction companies, highway maintenance contractors, local authorities and utility companies.

"As a consequence [of our customers] we have 230 32-tonne eight-wheeler tippers and tipper grabs on our books," Bumford says. They are usually fitted with Thompsons muckaway bodies, while Palfinger tends to be the favoured make of grab.

LCVH prefers to concentrate on renting out what are comparatively specialised vehicles rather than scramble for business in the mainstream truck hire market. "We've no desire to try to compete with people who are happy to offer tractor units for hire at £300 a week," remarks Bumford.

DAF support

LCVH has most makes of truck for rent, but DAF tends to be the dominant brand. "A lot of it is to do with DAF parts availability and the good overall level of service back-up that it offers," explains Bumford. "The most important thing is that this support is consistent and that's something we value."

LCVH prefers to concentrate on renting out what are comparatively specialised vehicles





Like the trucks, the light commercials LCVH hires out tend to be specialised

“We’ve no desire to try to compete with people who are happy to offer tractor units for hire at £300 a week”

Like the trucks, the light commercials LCVH hires out tend to be specialised. “We’ve got 95 mess vans on our fleet for example, along with a significant number of traffic management vehicles,” he says.

LCVH has half-a-dozen or so electric vans on its books and Bumford believes the total will grow. The supporting infrastructure will have to keep pace with the demand however – and he is not thinking solely about charging facilities.

One of the electric vans was recently involved in a collision and needed to go to a crash repair shop to have the damage put right. LCVH and its insurers couldn’t find one that would touch it because of the presence of high-voltage cables and the risk they present to repairers.

“If it had been a diesel, it would have been fixed,” says Bumford. “Because it was electric, it had to be written off.”

Business activities

The company typically keeps its vehicles for four years. “It means we can minimise our maintenance spend and maximise residual values,” Bumford says. It disposes of them itself rather than relying on auctions or dealers.

“We sell our vans from Leeds and our trucks from Sherburn,” he says.

Six in-house workshops are used to look after the LCVH fleet and they employ 55 technicians between them. “If we use a third-party workshop then we’re

not able to control the standard of work and we don’t know who’ll be doing each job,” says Bumford. “Furthermore, our workshops are capable of looking after bodies, cranes and winches as well as the vehicles themselves.”

The approach clearly works. “We submit over 1,100 vehicles a year for MOTs and 99.3 per cent of them pass first time,” he states.

Wear and tear

As the incident involving the electric van referred to earlier shows, rental vehicles suffer bumps and bangs from time to time, especially if they work in arduous industries. “Ours get their fair share, but for the most part it’s only bumpers and truck cab steps that really suffer,” he comments. “That said, the tyres on our trucks regularly incur damage, with sidewalls getting cut for example – that’s the consequence of going on and off some construction sites.”

Rental fleets with Euro 6 trucks available – and LCVH has them in large quantities – are likely to benefit transport operators as more and more cities roll out Clean Air Zones; including Leeds itself. Originally due to debut in January 2020, but now not due to come into force until next July, the Leeds zone will impose a £50 daily levy on non-Euro-6 lorries.

The introduction of the Clean Air Zone should help maintain demand for LCVH’s services, which has been consistent ever since 2010 says Bumford. “We’ve been growing at a rate of around 5 per cent to 6 per cent annually,” he reports.

“The point is that it’s manageable year-on-year growth and our people and systems can keep pace with it.” He says difficulties can arise if growth surges ahead so quickly that the business cannot cope and starts to run out of control.

The uncertainty created by Brexit hasn’t dented the firm’s steady progress or affected its confidence. “We spent £35m on new vehicles in 2019,” Bumford says. “When times are uncertain then businesses are more likely to rent than commit themselves to outright acquisition – and hire fleets benefit as a consequence.”

It helps that LCVH is active in different sectors he adds; so if one is contracting, another may be expanding. The construction and utility industries use similar vehicles, but they are two separate markets. “And we’ve got a significant involvement in both,” he concludes.

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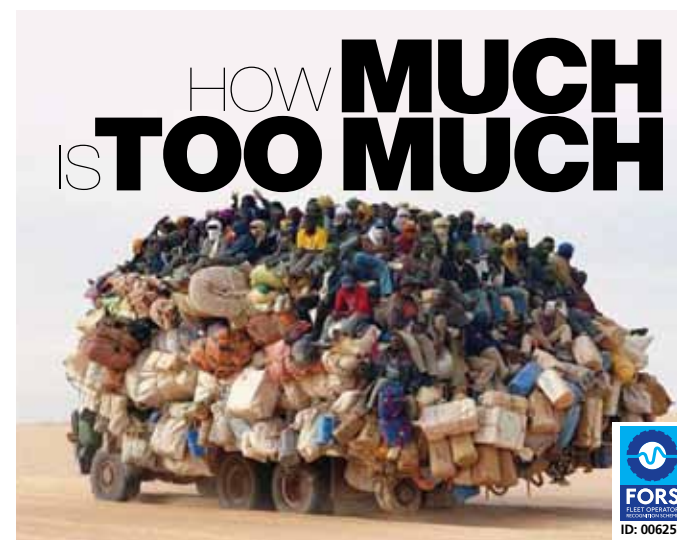

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