

With more training opportunities and qualifications available than ever before in the field, there should be no excuses for poor tyre maintenance or quality on trucks and trailers, reports John Challen

TYRE COLLEGE



Last year saw a lot of activity in tyre training, which appears to be breaking away from general vehicle maintenance. "The ability to properly maintain tyres is a specialism and, like it or not, it sits within our industry as a specialist operative function," contends Stefan Hay, managing director of the National Tyre Distributors Association (NTDA).

In January 2018, it launched a commercial tyre technician course designed to complement its existing scheme, Roadside Emergency Action Concerning Technicians (REACT).

"The creation of REACT was designed to look at standards and establish a new training programme where tyre technicians were taught to work safely at the roadside," explains Hay. The training programme leads to an assessment of competence, and, if successful, a licence for roadside work.

The scheme has been hailed a success; more than 5,300 licences have been issued since 2011. No REACT-qualified technicians have been killed during that period - which was one of the main aims of introducing the scheme. However, there was room for improvement, which is where the idea of a bolt-on scheme began.

Hay continues: "What we were finding is that training managers were training technicians on the safety aspects - but they were lacking in the skills needed to

do the job properly in specific relation to tyres. They wanted another training programme and licence scheme."

That led to the introduction of the licensed commercial tyre technician (LCTT) course, in January 2018. Most of the LCTT courses that NTDA-approved training providers are offering are held over three days, and usually involve between six and eight candidates. "The courses are really aimed at specialist tyre operatives working on commercial vehicles, and we look for a minimum of three months' practical commercial vehicle tyre fitting experience, and a full category B driver's licence, due to the nature of the job role, as pre-entry criteria," says Hay.

The course is split into three sections: one day in the classroom doing theory work, another in the workshop on practical tasks, and a third day of assessment and examination. The theory section includes topics such as health and safety, tool and equipment requirements, rim and sidewall identification and markings, and fault identification methods. The following day's practical session (pictured above) covers the likes of dynamic risk assessment, vehicle jacking, removal and replacement of road wheels, multi-piece split-rim mounting and dismounting, and tyre regrooving. The examination covers a multiple-choice theory question paper and five observed practical assessments.

STARTING AT THE BEGINNING

On the subject of apprenticeships, 2018 saw another opportunity for the tyre technician world with the creation of a Level 2 trailblazer apprenticeship, Specialist Tyre Technician, whose development was supported by ATS Euromaster, Central Tyre, Kwik Fit, Michelin, National Tyres and Autocare and Tructyre Fleet Management.

Although at the time of publication it is still too early to know which colleges or training bodies will provide it, course materials specify that the 18-month apprenticeship will see apprentices "working on heavy or commercial vehicles, carrying out both scheduled tyre maintenance and emergency response work across a wide variety of locations". Typical duties will include inspections, tyre dismounting and fitment to a range of vehicles; emergency call-outs; repair; stock control; and roadside risk assessment.

Another organisation involved in the apprenticeship scheme is Bridgestone, which is also a big supporter of the IRTE's own irtec tyre technician accreditation scheme, which launched in 2016. "Bridgestone vows to attract, engage and develop people," adds Paul Turner, training and development manager at Bridgestone. That pledge was underlined in 2018 with the opening of a facility for tyre technicians at MIRA in Warwickshire (www.is.gd/mivuso). 