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REGULATORY

Final call for MOT tests

Certain vehicles with a heavy goods chassis will need to have had an annual test by 20 May 2019 to remain legal on Britain's roads. Having lost their test exemption in May 2018, they now must pass an annual test before the next vehicle tax renewal is due. The changes have brought new types into the scope of the test, including mobile cranes and mobile concrete batching plant. All specialised heavy vehicles constructed on or adapted from HGV chassis are now required to be tested, including mobile cranes, breakdown trucks, tractors, electric vehicles, through to heavy trucks and low-loaders under Special Types General Order (STGO), as well as high-speed agricultural tractors. For details, see www.is.gd/bisuwa.

Walk-around checks

DVSA has updated its leaflets describing the checks required in a daily driver walk-around pre-use inspection. At least one such check of the whole vehicle must be made every 24 hours, usually before the vehicle is driven. The HGV leaflet can be found via: www.is.gd/unopun. The PCV leaflet can be found here: www.is.gd/usiyax.

Watch out for data errors

The Office of the Traffic Commissioner has recently announced that a number of operators are entering vehicle information incorrectly into records on the Vehicle Operator Licensing (VOL) service, which was launched in 2016. Common errors include incorrect vehicle registration marks (VRM) on licences, and incorrect or out-of-date maintenance provider details. Making sure the right VRMs are listed on the licence is critical. It confirms that the vehicles being operated are authorised under the O licence. It's also important for roadside checks. If the vehicle is incorrectly registered, it could be stopped more often, because DVSA won't be able to find it on a licence. HGV operators should check the disc when it arrives in the post, if the VRM is displayed on the disc. If it's wrong, operators need to register the right vehicle on their licence and return the incorrect disc to the Office of the Traffic Commissioner straight away. PSV operators need to double-check that the correct registration marks are entered if they supply the Office of the Traffic Commissioner with VRMs. Operators can check their details via www.is.gd/yezise.



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Roadside payments

The DVSA recently sent out an email alert about the new method of roadside payments introduced on 29 January. A new payment portal has replaced chip and PIN payments at DVSA enforcement sites. If a driver receives a fixed penalty, he or she will need to provide a telephone number or email address. A link to the payment portal and a unique code will then be sent by text message or email. This system allows drivers to nominate someone else, such as their employer, to pay a fine. Following some queries about the deadline for payments of fines, DVSA has confirmed that UK-based drivers will still have 28 days to pay fixed penalties. The new payment system only changes the method of payment, not the rules for payment.

Digital impressions

When the new Vehicle Operator Licensing (VOL) service launched in 2016, it gave operators the chance to do more online. Gov.uk Verify also allowed operators to sign an application digitally for the first time. From 1 April 2018, operators were no longer able to download paper forms; by the end of this year, the whole system (www.is.gd/yezise) will be paperless. Operators are being encouraged to do more and more online, which is said to reduce processing times.

Compliance advice

A new series of bulletins from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner offers tips designed to help maintain and promote O licence compliance, including key issues raised in public inquiries. As regards downloading tachograph data, the first one advises:

- Take a risk-based approach
- Contemplate the following factors that might increase risk of non-compliance: drivers who are away from base, drivers with a history of previous offences and drivers on strict schedules
- Choose the appropriate period within the maximum
- Be aware of the possibility of data from driver cards being overwritten if the period for driver cards has been exceeded.

As regards driver defect reporting, it recommends:

- Look out for tachograph reports that begin with immediate driving, as this would indicate unrecorded walk-around checks - or no checks at all - meaning the records are incomplete
- Drivers should immediately place their card in the slot and select 'other work' every time they drive. This should be habitual; failing to do so may be a deliberate action
- Operators should be aware that drivers may hide extra driving or other work at the beginning of the day in case of potential problems later.