Vision required

This month we profile a new regulation for van (and car) MOT test equipment – they have to be digitally connected to DVSA servers. And earlier this year, DVSA began to roll out the Commercial Vehicle Services app to some ATFs for testing HGVs and trailers. Next to be developed is software to capture results from Individual Vehicle Approval tests. In this way, submitting results data can be streamlined and made more resistant to fraud. So on one hand, this simply does away with a redundant extra step of paperwork.

But that's not all. These appear to be steps in a long journey toward a compliance regime that is based on big data. If it were rolled out to all commercial vehicle MOT equipment, DVSA would be able to have a picture of the engine and its aftertreatment system (emissions test); brakes (roller brake test), axles (wheel play indicator) and headlamp alignment, at least, as well as the degree of severity of any deficiencies in these systems, including prohibition notices.

The data could be quite useful to back up roadside enforcement, for example. Vehicles lacking a valid annual inspection either through delay or unrectified problems could be flagged up instantly. Police attending road traffic accidents could be given access to the entire MOT records of the vehicles involved.

And it could be combined with other datasets to great effect. Operator licensing comes to mind: the data could be combined with OCRS scores, for example, to better target the seriously and serially non-compliant, as the DVSA saying goes. Indeed, the data might be used to feed into the OCRS ranking system, just as in public inquiries some traffic commissioners have used first-time MOT failure rates as evidence of the operator's maintenance practices.

Perhaps companies could even make this work for them, if it had the right features. Might it be like a person's NHS doctor's surgery records, with all of the symptoms and interventions? Might it become a part of a company's own vehicle files, particularly if that company is a member of DVSA's Earned Recognition scheme? Now's the time for industry to put forward a vision for digital roadworthiness.

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