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Match-fit?

Much attention has been given to the important issue of safely returning vehicles to service after extended storage due to the COVID-19 lockdown. For example, there have been tyre check tips (www.is.gd/hefuzo) as well as official derogations provided by the office of the traffic commissioner (www.is.gd/oxicob). The latter states that vehicles which haven't had the regular six-weekly check require an extended pre-start inspection by a competent person.

The last part is really important. While checking vehicles is all well and good, it should not be forgotten that any inspection is limited by the knowledge and attention of the person carrying it out. (And, on that point, the irtec licencing scheme is an independent guarantee of competence; its part in certifying DVSA's vehicle standards assessors is covered pp16-17).

In normal circumstances, employed technicians are constantly renewing their expertise through their work. This keeps the blade sharp, so to speak. But what happens when the tools are put away unused during lockdown? Then technicians are likely to be as rusty as the vehicles that they are to inspect.

This is no slight to Great Britain's great technicians. One wouldn't expect professional footballers to resume the season without any work. (At time of writing, UK premiership teams have begun training before contesting their first matches this month.)

If the road safety of a vehicle returning to service depends on an assessment, and the worth of that assessment depends on the competence of the assessor, then what measures

are operators putting in place to make sure that technicians now away from the workshop will be up to the job? Of course furloughed employees cannot be legally asked to work.

But when they come back, operators should have some creative solutions ready to get technicians' heads back in the game.



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