



RUBBISH SAFETY

The specialist refuse collection vehicles that collect rubbish bins are an essential tool to manage the flow of waste from households

and businesses across the country. As commercial vehicles, they are mounted with multiple specialist components, including body - which sometimes includes multiple compartments - and hydraulically-actuated components including compactor, ejector unit and bin-lift (above, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's nine new Mercedes-Benz Eonic 2630Ls have Dennis compactor bodies and Terberg bin-lifts). Layers of safety-related equipment protects workers from harm during operations and maintenance.

Part of the point of this project was to integrate all of the guidance and information available from suppliers that normally work independently, says working group member Chris Grime, national fleet manager at Veolia. He recalls that these meetings were the first time that bodybuilder Dennis Eagle had discussed inspection, maintenance and repair with bin lift OEM Terberg. Bringing them together helps ensure that operators are taking a holistic approach.

IRTE is preparing a new best practice guide on the inspection and maintenance of RCVs

Grime states: "We have quite a number of chassis manufacturers and maintenance providers who are at ease in maintaining chassis, even on a contract maintenance basis. But when it comes to the body, few organisations offer that detail."

The Best Practice Guide is intended to help make sure operators are aware of RCVs' particular care requirements, to ensure consistent levels of maintenance across the UK. "Manufacturers' guidance is not weak. It is there. But I'm not sure that everyone is actually picking it up and using it," he adds.

Fellow working group member John Eastman, IRTE council chairman, himself a former fleet engineer at a large RCV operator, says that he is concerned that some operators exclude some safety-related items from drivers' checklists. "Some operators might take shortcuts, but there is too much safety-related equipment. These are bits of kit to be respected and to be worked properly."

RCVs are not just operated by large waste management companies that have

their own workshops, but also by smaller operators and subcontractors, points out Grime. Do they know, for example, that bin lifts are required by law to have an annual thorough examination by a competent person under LOLER (Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998)?

Faulty safety equipment threatens everyone working around an RCV, in operations and in maintenance. To empty a full RCV, for example, hydraulic rams swing the bin lift up and over the rear opening, and the ejector plate pushes out the contents. Once it is empty, the bin lift can be lowered again with a single button press. At a metre above the bottom of the stroke, the motion cuts out, and requires the operator to press and hold two buttons to complete the closure. This feature protects the operator by keeping both arms out of the way of the ever-diminishing gap between the back of the body and the bin lift frame. Grime adds: "It's really important that people understand what the 1m stop is, and check on a daily basis that it works."

The best practice guide, which includes a sample inspection document, is due to be completed by the end of the year. [TE](#)