

“Although the future of HGV for long-distance work will still be diesel for a long time, in cities, 16t and 18t electric lorries will be reducing emissions and we will be working on them”

A LEG UP

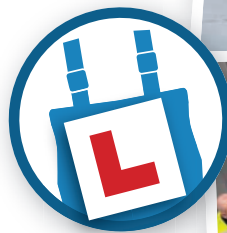
Rivus - which combines the maintenance operations of BT Fleet, for vans, and Pullman Fleet Solutions for HGVs - has opened a technician training academy in Leeds, reports Will Dalrymple

The academy expects to train all of its 600-plus technicians to an IMI Level 3 award for electric/hybrid vehicle system repair and replacement by 2025, as well as all of its HGV technicians to irtec inspection technician.

The idea for the Rivus academy came from Victoria Knight, chief executive officer (interim), in her previous role at Rivus as group HR director (pictured above, second from left, with operational trainer Carl Belcher, technical training manager James Haydon and national field trainer Steven Figg). She says: “Developing our in-house talent and providing development opportunities for the Rivus team is paramount to the success of our business and forms a significant part of our strategy to grow our own talent to help overcome the current technician skills gap.”

The centre has developed training programmes that have been accredited by IMI, which is also the authorised assessor of the IRTE’s irtec scheme. It includes two trainers (a third is being recruited) under the guidance of Haydon, who was specifically recruited to start it up. Its assets include a Toyota Prius, DAF HGV, a classroom, high-voltage tooling and a dedicated workshop area for practical instruction and assessment.

At present, four qualifications are offered. As well as irtec, there is IMI Level 1 award in hybrid/electric vehicle awareness, a classroom-only awareness course. The Level 2 award covers routine maintenance, how to electrically isolate



the vehicle and shut it down.

Level 3 covers replacing high-voltage components. The latter two are combined into a single two-day course, half of which is spent in the workshop. “While you’ve shut down the vehicle and isolated it, you might as well use it to remove a high-voltage component,” observes Haydon. Although he is actually qualified to Level 4, which covers hybrid/EV diagnostics, testing and repair, Haydon said that this level of competence is not currently required at Rivus, so is not offered.

Still, he argues that the company is investing in the training at lower levels because it is “important for the future-proofing of our company,” as, from 2035, new sales of internal combustion-engined light vehicles will be banned in the UK.

Turning back to the present, the academy’s first intake started on 28 February, and six-person groups will follow them on a weekly or twice-weekly basis until all are trained. This includes HGV technicians. He adds: “Although the future of HGV for long-distance work will still be diesel for a long time, in cities, 16t and 18t electric lorries will be reducing emissions and we will be working on them.”



Qualifications for EVs last a lifetime, although the IMI’s TechSafe programme, which Rivus has signed up to, adds extra

continuous professional development requirements. In contrast, the irtec inspection technician accreditation requires a five-yearly retest. Even though it is only offered to HGV technicians, which number 400, those requirements, plus the technical depth of the course, mean that it imposes as significant a load as the EV training (which is to a larger group), if not more. Class sizes are reduced to three. Even experienced technicians require updating about the latest regulatory changes. Those that don’t regularly do inspections would require two or three days’ training to run through the entire process, says the technical training manager.

But Haydon speaks passionately about its importance: “We want everyone to be in line with legislation; it changes so much. We want to make sure everyone is on the same page, correctly inspecting an HGV for the safety of customers, and to invest in our people that have not had that before.”

In future, Haydon hopes to expand the number of courses offered, such as F-Gas compliance. A further future development would see the academy open to external technicians. [TE](#)