

The heavy snowfall at the end of last year may be a distant memory, but, for many, there are constant reminders every time they venture out onto a public highway.

Potholes – and in some cases what can only be described as pot trenches – swiftly followed the white stuff's departure. Many have re-appeared, having already been 'mended' once in 2010, following January's cold snap. In a world where the one-year guarantee comes attached to the majority of goods purchased, where do members of the public go to get their refund?

For transport operators and HGV drivers, the implications of encountering these abysses in the road can be huge. Many companies have suffered wheel misalignment – and, in some cases, damaged tyres and wheels – as a result of falling foul of the highway craters. In some examples, this has led to extended vehicle downtime and, as a result, loss of income.

Given the damage also sometimes done to steering and suspension, vehicle safety can be reduced. The only solution is to ensure that wheels are correctly aligned after an encounter, so that hauliers can minimise the effects of any pothole damage and stay as safe as possible.

As well as the safety benefits offered by correct wheel alignment, hauliers can also reduce their running costs. When a truck's wheels are correctly aligned, tyre life is extended and fuel consumption is improved (just one degree of misalignment can increase fuel consumption by 5%). Emissions are also reduced; there is less wear and tear on mechanical components; and drivers report reduced fatigue, while tyres are less likely to overheat.

The actual process of wheel alignment is quick, too. An alignment system from Haweka – the TA-20 – takes less than 10 minutes to accurately measure every angle on a truck, and can be used on twin-steers, rigids, semi-trailers and buses.

There is already talk of worse winters to come over the next few years, so it might be a good idea to start checking – and saving – now.



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