Arclid aims to eliminate truck blind spots

Arclid Transport has developed a proprietary left-side visibility system that could solve the problem of blind spots on trucks for good.

The firm has reversing cameras fitted to its vehicles, linked to a 7in monitor in the cab, but Arclid transport manager Peter Conway says he was also keen to develop its commercial vehicle safety systems further.

With the help of Heler Electrical, Arclid has unveiled the Blind Spot Eliminator, which links a sensor, a camera and an audible alarm to the existing monitor to ensure that drivers are always aware of any vehicle, pedestrian or cyclist on their left.

"The safety of HGVs relies not only on safe driving inside the cab, but also on good safety awareness from other road users," explains Conway.

"Last year's incident [when one of Arclid's vehicles was famously involved in an incident caused by an under-taking manoeuvre by a car] brought it home to us that you just cannot always rely on other road users to be sufficiently cautious near HGVs or understand the visibility restrictions."

The Blind Spot Eliminator works via a sensor installed in the near-side bumper bar. When the driver indicates left, if the sensor picks up any kind of object on the left of the vehicle a camera located on the passenger side mirror switches on and sends live pictures to the in-cab monitor, located in the sun visor area.

At the same time, an audible alarm sounds in the cab to alert the driver to the potential hazard, prompting him to look at the monitor and ensure that the manoeuvre is safe before moving left.

The innovation from Arclid comes in the wake of new proposals from the EU to make mandatory reductions to trailer sizes across the EU for safety reasons.

Waitrose cuts CO_2 on gas-fed Sprinters

Waitrose says it is seriously cutting carbon emissions since buying five Mercedes-Benz Sprinter NGT (natural gas technology) gas-powered vans.

Ray Collington, fleet engineer for the John Lewis Partnership, explains that its new vans run on sustainable liquid bio-methane, made from landfill gas, which is converted into high quality, clean fuel.

"This is a very exciting project," comments Collington, stating that the new Sprinter NGT vans are exceptionally quiet, and emit negligible CO_2 and little or no particulates.

His vehicles are all 3.5-tonne Sprinter 316 NGT panel vans with insulated bodies by Gray & Adams, as well as Hubbard refrigeration units.

In fact, the Sprinter NGT is a bifuel vehicle, powered by either petrol or gas, with the 1.8-litre, four-cylinder engine delivering 156hp, irrespective of fuel source. As standard, it has a Euro 4 engine, but Waitrose upgrade the power plant to meet the EEV (enhanced environmentally friendly vehicle) emissions standard, above Euro 5.

"We're keen to learn as much as we can from these new vehicles, because we firmly believe that gas has a viable future as an alternative fuel source," comments Collington.

"Bio-methane gives us a high-performance fuel, produced using locally sourced, sustainable materials – it is a genuine alternative to diesel for us in some applications," he points out.

The Waitrose vehicles refuel at a facility operated by Gasrec, Europe's first commercial producer of liquid Biomethane. They were supplied by Reading dealer Rygor Commercials and are emblazoned with the logo: 'Using recycled energy – powered by Bio-methane'.

Chassis cab, dropsider and Traveliner minibus variants of the gas-powered Sprinter are also available at 3.5 tonnes gvw, as is a 5-tonne Sprinter 516 NGT chassis cab variant.

Productivity improves with rear-steer DAF

A new DAF drawbar outfit that can carry several pieces of plant or site cabins is helping improve productivity at plant hire firm Speedy – thanks to its ability to get in and out of tight spots.

The bespoke specification was worked out between Speedy, dealer Lancashire DAF and BNP Paribas Leasing Solutions.

After selecting the longest wheelbase available for the DAF CF85 in its rear-steer, four-axle 8x2 configuration (7.1m), bodybuilder PPS Commercials fitted a 6.55m flatbed body.

The choice of the FAX rear-steer CF85 truck makes it easier to use at sites where space is restricted. The axle self steers at low speeds, but is locked in the straight position once above crawling speed.

"[The new DAF] is already proving to be a very efficient truck to operate and will help us to improve the service we offer to our customers," says Ian Leonard, Speedy director.

"We always need to find ways to improve every aspect or our operation to optimise the use of our many thousands of high value items of plant and machinery. This DAF will help us to do that," he continues.

The new DAF is based at Speedy's Foston depot, near Derby. From here, it makes up to four drops and collections a day throughout the north of England, up to the Scottish border and across the Midlands. It's expected to cover around 100,000km a year.

Isuzu gives mobile power to Electricity NW

Electricity NW reports success with its three Isuzu Truck N75.190 Forward 7.5t chassis cabs, which are delivering emergency power services in the North Lakes and Cumbria.

Graham Davies, from the North West electricity distribution firm, says that his organisation assessed all 7.5t trucks currently available, before acquiring the N75 rigids.

He explains that each of the Isuzu trucks is capable of carrying the two 200kVA Atlas Copco mobile generators and associated fuel tanks needed to provide for its requirement of in excess of 20 hours' emergency power.

"In every other case, the gvw of the chassis meant that we would need a 12-tonne truck to handle these emergency situations," states Davies.

"This was not the case with Isuzu. The unladen weight of the 7.5 tonne chassis cab gives us the required payload to accommodate both the equipment and the fuel needed for us to provide up to 22.5 hours of continuous power," he says.

"Also, the compact footprint of the vehicle is ideal for reaching remote locations, small access roads and navigating tight country lanes where they will inevitably be expected to go," he adds.

All three vehicles were supplied to Electricity NW by Isuzu dealer Warrington Vehicle Centre and are expected to deliver a working life of at least seven years, based out of depots in Kendal, Carlisle and Workington.

These are not the first Isuzu trucks at Electricity NW. Last year, three new Isuzu N62.150 Forward 6.2 tonne rigids were acquired – each being fitted with a bespoke body, including a gang van with on-board compressed air supply, a tipper body and a gas cylinder carrier with tail lift.