

## All eyes are on Europe when it comes to truck and trailer braking technology, according to Jeff Lowe of Doctor Air Brake.

Lowe, who has been setting up a division of Doctor Air Brake in Australia to deliver brake systems test equipment and services, says he has been surprised not only by the lack of sophistication, in terms of standards, but also the immaturity of electronic truck safety systems in the country.

“EBS on trailers has become pretty much standard in the UK over the last 22 years, whereas in Australia it’s only been six or seven years – and then just on certain makes and configurations,” he states.

“When I’m alongside these B Double trailers on motorways, with a total mass of up to 68 tonnes on nine axles travelling at 100km/h, I can’t help but think about how the combination would behave under heavy braking on slippery conditions,” he continues.

“North American tractor units have been the preferred interstate workhorse for many years. Only in more recent times has the European tractor made inroads, as their power outputs reached the levels required to pull these multiple trailers,” explains Lowe. “But most North American tractor units do not have EBS as standard, so, even if the trailers are equipped, there’s no full CAN communication between the two, unless retrofit kits are fitted.”

Lowe makes the point that roll stability, load sensing and ABS are standard on most new European trailers, and adds that extended safety products from his company, and others, work in harmony with these systems.

However, he also says: “All this clever technology works hand in hand with the need for higher freight efficiencies, but the downside is you have to know it’s working correctly.” For him, the key is partly reliable test and diagnostic equipment that is easy to use – with no need for expensive training or “wheel choc-sized operating manuals” – and partly experience.

The UK’s development work has allowed many to take ABS/EBS and roll stability systems for granted. And long may it continue.



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