

Clock watching

Steve Banner investigates the latest developments in the world of tachographs

Sweeping changes to the design of digital tachographs now being considered by the European Union look set to come into force in 2017–2018. That's the advice from Ralf Bosch, legislation specialist at tachograph manufacturer VDO. If implemented, these amendments will allow enforcement officials to examine onboard units remotely from the roadside, as trucks travel past, in their search for individuals disobeying the Drivers' Hours rules – for example, by failing to insert their driver's card.

"Remote checking will be used to flag up drivers who are cheating the system, so that action can be taken," states Bosch. "But officials will not be able automatically to impose on-the-spot fines electronically. Nor will they be able to download any of the driver's personal information."

Automatic recording by tachographs of start and finish locations, expressed in terms of latitude and longitude determined by GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite System), is on its way, too, under the EU's proposals, warns Bosch. However, software that translates the co-ordinates into information that operators can comprehend may first be needed.

A third development will see digital tachographs required to undergo testing at least once every two years to check they can still prevent tampering. Any units that succumb risk losing their Type Approval status and may also have to be replaced – at considerable expense.



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New licence/card combo

Other proposals include incorporating the driver's card and driving licence into one piece of plastic. This measure is likely to be resisted by the UK, along with other national governments, on the grounds that it will effectively compel drivers to carry their licence with them – not yet a legal requirement on this side of the Channel. The European Parliament has called for an impact assessment, which means that, for the moment, this measure is being held in abeyance.

The EU will finalise the proposed legislative changes by the end of this year, with the technical specifications set for publication by the end of 2014. **TE**

VDO's DTGO 2.0 digital tachograph meets the latest EU requirements

New tachograph launched

Ahead of proposed changes to tachograph legislation, VDO has introduced its latest digital version, the DTGO 2.0, which complies with an EU requirement that new units must accept a second, independent, motion signal, as well as speed. As a consequence, the practice followed by unscrupulous drivers of attaching a magnet to the gearbox, to interfere with the tachograph's speed input, should no longer work.

One of DTGO 2.0's most useful developments will not be available until later this year, however – with the advent of an optional VDO Counter. It provides a display that enables drivers to see how much driving time remains, when they should take their next break and how long that break ought to be.

The display shows how much more time remains before the driver can begin driving and how long he or she can drive for. Information is provided about the remaining weekly driving time and can be shown over more than one week.

Given that it can be difficult for drivers to see tacho displays, because of often-awkward positioning, VDO is also offering SmartLink, which enables its Counter information to be shown on a dash-mounted smartphone.