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# Hybrids and electrics: time to challenge competence

**A**s we go to press, the transport industry is breathing a collective sigh of relief. The DSA (Driving Standards Agency) has apparently bowed to pressure and launched a consultation on the thorny issue of whether or not the UK's 30,000 technicians are required to complete full Driver CPC training, merely to take vehicles to test.

FTA (the Fright Transport Association) and RHA (the Road Haulage Association) had raised concerns over advice previously issued by the DfT (Department for Transport) indicating that technicians must be included. They wrote to Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport Stephen Hammond in May to object that workshop technicians should surely not be in scope for the DCPC Directive (Transport Engineer, June 2013, page 6).

A success then, as far as it goes. At least some breathing space for the vast majority of operators, dealerships and workshops that have not thus far seen any reason to include technicians in their DCPC training programmes – and may well have been set worrying about yet another compliance hurdle.

For us though, there remains another looming issue: that of catering for multiple new technologies and specifically their impacts both on operations and engineering in the workshop. This is not just about Euro 6 trucks, already on our roads and set to arrive in increasing numbers in our garages and test stations in the coming months. It is also about the steadily growing number of hybrids and electric vehicles – buses, certainly, but additionally now vans and even trucks. And how long will it be before fuel cell technology takes off?

Furthermore, it is about the gradually changing shape of the nation's distribution and haulage fleet, as savvy operators respond to cost and contract pressures with innovative vehicles that are better fit for purpose. Double-deck, moving-deck trailers are part of that; so is the range of DfT-licensed longer trailers. But so also are the swelling numbers of 10m and 11m lightweight urban trailers that are challenging the dominance of rigids in this sector (page 12).

Importantly, each has its own complement of underlying technologies. They range from materials and construction methods that concern bodyshops, to back-axle command steer systems, for manoeuvrability, ESP (electronic stability program) systems and the rest – all of which need to be the preserve of workshop technicians.

It's a picture of mushrooming diversity. And with the £6m government-funded UK Centre for Sustainable Road Freight (SRF, tasked with reviewing logistics and vehicle engineering to minimise the environmental impact of road freight) now officially open (page 9), we must expect that trend to accelerate. The big names behind it – John Lewis, Tesco, Warburtons, Wincanton, Laing O'Rourke, DHL, Denby Transport, Volvo, Haldex, SDC and others – tend to mean business.

Seems it's time to revisit our engineer and technician training programmes, starting with irtec. And, for fleet operators and transport managers alike, it's probably also time to reconsider how to ensure competence and compliance from maintenance service providers. IRTE's Workshop Accreditation came along at just the right time, didn't it?



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