

# HELPING HANDS

**Want to burn less diesel? You'd better help the people who can make a real difference to your monthly fuel bills - your drivers. Brian Weatherley looks at in-cab training tools for trucks and vans**

**W**hen Des Evans, MAN Truck & Bus UK's ebullient boss, says he probably has more information on UK truck driving behaviour than any other vehicle manufacturer, it's no idle boast. "I've got a billion kilometres a year of it," he explains. Since June 2008, the German truck maker, aided by telematics partner Microlise, has been collecting data from its EcoStyle driver development program, building-up an impressive repository of information, especially on those with a heavy right foot.

For a good reason: "The driver has control over 90% of costs and all the profits," insists Evans – concurring with the findings of Shell's recent Fuel Matters 2014 study (*TE*, May 2014, page 37). And MAN's head of fleet management David Lester adds: "We have installed 11,000 telematics systems, of which 8,000 are still in use and being continually monitored, with a view to helping operators improve their drivers' behaviour." MAN offers various options, starting with a basic report delivered automatically that can be daily, weekly or monthly, and ranging up to an in-cab device that communicates directly with the driver, visually and audibly.

EcoStyle was among the first driver monitoring systems to consider fuel economy in the round, ranking drivers on an 'A' to 'G' scale, based on seven parameters, including use of cruise control and exhaust brake, harsh braking and acceleration. "That system's still in place today," confirms Lester, "but we've really honed it." There are now 10 parameters, including harsh cornering and contextual speeding, which takes account of the road being used.

"We still use the A-G rating and publish a league table that many operators pin up on their notice boards," he continues. "Competition being what it is,

it's very powerful. We can also produce an individual report for a driver, showing their performance and giving them tips to improve."

EcoStyle runs in parallel with MAN's ProfiDrive driver training programme: every MAN truck sold with an R&M package includes a day's ProfiDrive training. After the EcoStyle hardware has been installed, MAN first monitors how the vehicle is driven to create a baseline before applying driver training interventions. "Typically, we find most fleets start at 'D'. We know we're not going to get every driver up to an 'A', but, if we can get a fleet to 'B' on average, then from D to B is about a 10% fuel saving, as each grade change equates to approximately 5%."

## Up close and personal

Alongside EcoStyle's hidden telematics, MAN offers an optional Driver Feedback Module (DFM), which provides visual and audible warnings on driving style. "If everything is fine, it glows green and is silent," explains Lester. "As the driver starts to infringe – for example, if he exceeds the speed limit – it gives him an amber warning light and announces 'warning: speeding'. If he continues to infringe, DFM glows red and states 'infringement recorded'. The driver then knows that bad mark will be on his driving report next time it's produced." MAN is currently developing a DFM based on a removable seven-inch tablet, which could provide an instant evaluation report for drivers at shift end.

All other major truck manufacturers also offer driving style appraisal tools – certainly on their Euro 6 models. Mercedes' EcoSupport in-dash driver evaluation is part of its Fleetboard telematics. It not only shows drivers how they're doing, but can also download scores to fleet managers for review. Similarly, Iveco's Driving Style Evaluation – standard in new Stralis – is like having a driving instructor on-

**Left to right: MiX Telematics' RIBAS; Crack's driver behaviour indicator; DAF XF DPA display; Dynafleet's app; Mercedes EcoSupport with engine brake; RIBAS unit in situ; Scania driving tips display; Iveco Stralis dashboard**





board, according to the manufacturer. Likewise, the Link Module in Renault's Optifleet can provide daily or weekly feedback to each driver, based on user-set parameters, such as time spent in the green band, excessive revving and idling. Then Scania Driver Support (SDS) is standard on Scania Euro 6 chassis, with its dashboard display giving percentage scores for driving style.

Steve Davies, director of Hampshire-based temperature-controlled operator Davies International, has been a fan of SDS since the firm switched to Scania. "We were prompted to specify SDS when we replaced our tractor units with the product – so all 15 trucks we operate have SDS," he explains.

"We felt we needed expertise from Scania to get the ultimate performance from our drivers and the product, so all drivers undertook a full day's course with a Scania driver trainer. They then receive follow-up coaching phone calls every two months to discuss issues such as coasting and idling."

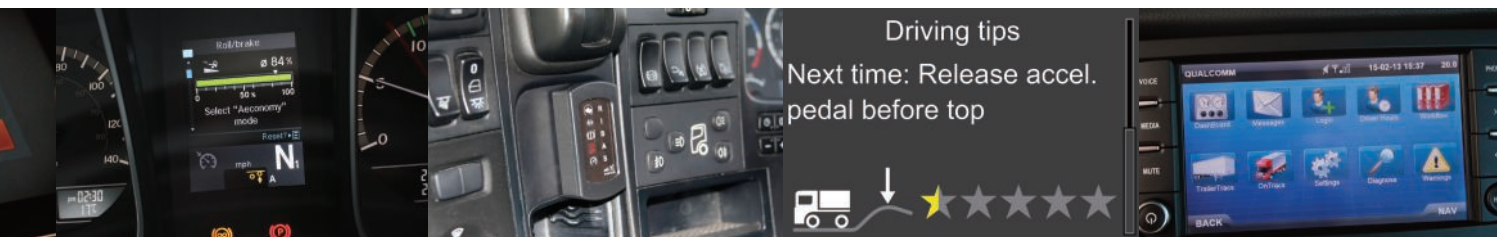
Davies says the firm then gets this information from Scania. "We discuss with them the areas we need to work on with the drivers and hence improve

mpg. It's a mix of Scania's knowledge, our management and the drivers' ability that makes the concept work."

What about savings? "Since switching our fleet to Scania, we've seen an improvement in mpg of 9–10% [8.3 to 9.1 mpg average]. We feel this is down to the product, the switch from manual to automatic gearboxes, and initial driver training," states Davies. "There are more gains to be had with further driver coaching, but we're extremely pleased."

Virtual driving instructors aren't only for the heavies though. DAF's Euro 6 LF has the same Driver Performance Assistance (DPA) display as its CF/XF bigger brothers. It scores drivers on fuel consumption and anticipation. DPA also advises drivers to turn off the air con when not needed, saving up to 2% on fuel, and to avoid idling, saving up to 1.5 litres of diesel per hour.

Volvo is also offering an app for its Dynafleet service that provides driving information (previously only available to the traffic office) on an iPhone or iPad. One of the app's main functions – fuel





efficiency score – rates the driver in four areas (anticipation, braking, engine and gearbox use, speed and idling).

Several third party telematics companies also offer in-cab driver monitoring. MiX Telematics' RIBAS (over-revving, excessive idling, harsh braking, harsh acceleration and over-speeding) uses red, amber and green status lights, and warning tones to advise on driving style in real time.

### Massive savings

Sean Morgan, operations and commercial director at Kellaway Building Supplies, uses RIBAS to cut fleet engine idling and reports a massive reduction. "Prior to fitment of RIBAS, I'd estimate 90% of our drivers allowed their vehicles to idle excessively. That figure is now down to something like 5%."


Driver performance aids are also available for smaller vehicles from CTrack, Fleetmatics and eDrive. The latter's Active Driver Feedback (ADF) is provided via a TomTom PRO, which shows real-time alerts on speeding, harsh steering and braking, over-revving and fuel lost to excessive idling. ADF data can also be analysed in the traffic office, using TomTom's

Worksmart fleet management system.

Fleetmatics has also recently upgraded its telematics box so it can be integrated with a Garmin sat nav. That now allows messages from Fleetmatics' GPS-based fleet management and tracking system – such as 'you are driving too fast' – to be shown on the display, so drivers see them in real time.

Meanwhile, Ctrack's Driver Behaviour Indicator (DBI) alerts drivers in real time to infringements, also via warning lights. The device warns of a range of exceptions – from harsh acceleration, braking and cornering to travelling too fast over speed humps. Ctrack's league table reports allow fleets to compare driving performance, with drivers placed in green, yellow or red bands for each exception, and scores used in a ranking system.

Utilising Ctrack's web-based system, James Frew, one of Scotland's largest building services firms, reckons it has cut fuel costs by almost 30%.

Ultimately, MAN's Evans is adamant that driver training aids are a win-win. "Never mind these being a spy in the cab; they are supporting the driver. Your biggest saving aid on fuel isn't technology: it's your driver." 



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