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engineering success

Power to the people at the CV Show 2015

There are times when the power of the people is greater than that of the legislature and its executive. Just occasionally, even the dominance of Europe in matters regulatory is usurped and the market finds itself bowing to the will of what amount to regional pressure groups.

So it is with London's Safer Lorry Scheme, now set to go live on 1 September. Transport for London (TfL) and the London Councils will institute a London-wide ban on otherwise perfectly legal vehicles over 3.5 tonnes not fitted with additional safety equipment (approved side guards and Class V and VI mirrors – page 8), with £1,000 fines for non compliance.

It's a similar story with FORS (the Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme). Again, truck operators and their suppliers are required to fit much the same equipment to perfectly roadworthy vehicles, while also demonstrating best environmental practice, or they won't be considered for contracts involving TfL. That scheme is now being rolled out nationally, with responsibility ceded to the FORS Community Partnership – which comprises AECOM, CILT (Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport) and Fleet Source.

New operators wishing to sign up must pay a registration fee (starting at £65 for one truck, rising to £2,250 for more than 100) plus the price of an annual audit and the cost of the fitments (page 5). But they'll need yet more cash, because there's also the similar CLOCS (Construction Logistics and Cycle Safety Scheme), which aims to improve truck operators' management of work-related road risk and "ensure that a road safety culture is embedded across the industry".

You might want to think of these as just more costs of doing business, the benefits of which include improved safety and an enhanced image for signatories in the eyes of the people. However, the sheer proliferation of such programmes raises two obvious questions. First, why not just a single safety scheme for larger commercial vehicles? And second, why not make any requirements part of the existing national regulatory framework? Then we would all know where we stand; there would be no need for additional administration and policing; and DVSA (Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency) and the traffic commissioners would be back properly in charge. And everyone – vulnerable road users included – would, theoretically, be safer.

That brings us to irtec technician licensing and the IRTE's Workshop Accreditation, each aimed at independently verifying competence and compliance of the people and organisations carrying out vehicle maintenance. Both are now in the ascendancy, and not just as O licence holders seek to limit litigation. No, again it's about improving safety and professionalism, and hence the public perception of your brand – and, crucially, under nationally, not regionally, recognised schemes.

However, taking excellence business-wide means staying on top of all aspects of your game. And that's where the international CV Show (14–16 April 2015, NEC – see page 15) comes in. Certainly, the IRTE, SMMT and RHA will be present, offering advice and guidance to members and non members alike. But also representatives from the entire transport industry will be on hand, demonstrating new products and services, many aimed at transforming operational efficiency, cutting costs and, yes, improving safety and compliance across the board.



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