

TURNING POINT

DVSA chief executive Gareth Llewellyn speaks to Will Dalrymple about the agency's current constraints and future vision

For parts of the UK, particularly the South East, ATF (authorised testing facility) lanes are under pressure. Staff shortages have required vehicle inspectors to be sent from other parts of the country, and others to work overtime, to help carry out annual HGV inspections, admits Gareth Llewellyn, chief executive of the DVSA (Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency).

But there's a plan. First, DVSA is currently interviewing some 60 candidate vehicle inspectors to help meet demand - although not all would be expected to join - and none would be placed at ATFs right away, to enable time for training. Second, it is encouraging ATFs to share unused slots with others, and has proposed setting up a clearing house among ATFs, so that an operator could find every available inspection slot in the local area. Third, DVSA has temporarily stopped granting licences for new ATFs (there are now 560) "to give us a bit of time to stabilise the service delivery".

The next year or so is likely to remain very busy for vehicle inspectors, though, as two other big changes occur.

First, from May 2018, ATFs will perform metered emissions tests for vehicles to comply with London's ultra-low emissions zone requirements (Euro 4 requirements for petrol vans; Euro 6 for smaller diesel vans; Euro VI for lorries, buses and coaches). In fact, roadside



emissions checks began in August 2017.

Second, some 30,000 new heavy vehicles, including mobile cranes, breakdown vehicles and other engineering trucks built on HGV chassis, are required to have an annual test, it was announced last month, following a 2014-15 industry consultation (see also p5). Although the rule indicated that they should all be tested by May 2018, Llewellyn says that not only is that timescale unrealistic - given the number of operators new to annual licensing - but also logistically problematic. He explains: "We're currently working with DfT to see whether we can profile the additional 30,000 over a period of time."

ROADSIDE CHECKS

Changes are also coming to the roadside enforcement process, where the agency employs 800 front-line staff. Last year they carried out 220,000 checks on 80,000 vehicles, he says;

DVSA's own report (see link below) states that 35.6% of mechanical checks at the roadside and in customers' premises led to a prohibition in 2015-16.

From April, enforcement officers have been working to new targets. Last year's was based on truck volume; that runs the risk of stopping perfectly good trucks, which is a waste of time. This year's focus is to find more severe faults. (By the way: officers are "definitely not" financially rewarded for finding faults, he states, nor has their mandate changed to stop any trucks that look unsafe or that pose a risk to the public.)

Picking up more severe faults without simply making many more stops requires DVSA to work smarter. So the agency is working through better targeting of high-risk vehicles, such as those driven by operators with a poor OCRS, Operator Compliance Risk Score. He describes OCRS as "a summation of a lot of intelligence, and it gives us an

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Gareth Llewellyn



opportunity, together with other bits of information, to make sure that we target the right people.” There are 10,000 (of the 80,000 hauliers on its books) rated ‘red’, signifying highest risk. Other intelligence comes from public inquiries, through information shared from – and with – foreign enforcement agencies, and from targeting methods. About the latter, Llewellyn adds: “If we believe that there’s a trend, we will take disruptive action against [an operator] to make sure that they understand that this is not a one-off event.”

Non-GB trucks are a particular concern, he says, because they are un-profiled, and because they have less to lose than GB-based hauliers who could be brought before a UK traffic commissioner. Tachograph violations are more common in non-GB vehicles; the competitive advantage gained by cheating on the tachograph may be worth far more than the £300 spot fine imposed for having a manipulation device – if they are caught at all.

In response, DVSA is looking at how to increase fines for tachograph manipulation devices. It is also, as it announced last month, starting to implement an enforcement system that applies retroactively over the past 28 days (see also p44). Explains the chief

executive: “If you tot that up, it becomes a much greater deterrent than in the past.” What makes this possible is new technology: Tachoscan, developed by Inelo of Poland, plugs into the tachograph and downloads data on to the enforcement officer’s laptop.

CYBER ENFORCEMENT

These days, the roads have eyes; DVSA is also tapping into the network of road cameras that use ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) technology. “If we spot a vehicle going through a number of cameras when we know that driver should have been resting, we don’t need to put somebody roadside or send somebody to the site, we can just send them a letter, providing an enforcement penalty through the post.”

Data generated through ANPR systems, among other sources, support ‘remote enforcement’. He explains: “The ability to search through lots of information to find oddities where you might want to take enforcement action is really quite important.” DVSA is using these ‘big data’ analysis techniques to automate routine enforcement of common issues.


In contrast to the agency’s intensifying focus on what it calls the ‘seriously and serially non-compliant’, however, DVSA

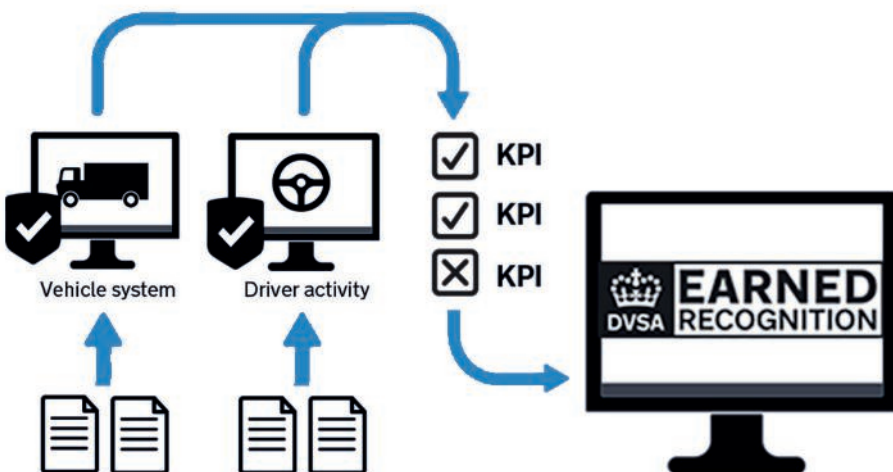
is showing its friendly side toward better-performing operators.

An example is the benefit that is provided by its new Earned Recognition pilot (see also <https://is.gd/oyiyoh>). The scheme rewards operators who hit key performance indicators in drivers’ hours and maintenance records compliance by reducing the roadside and office inspections (as depicted below). This smoothes the way for trustworthy operators; it gives extra help for those who help themselves. (Llewellyn makes no bones about aiming this scheme high; in fact, he says, “it’s intended to reward the best performers and encourage the rest of industry to aspire to those standards. It would be disappointing if some didn’t find it tough.”)

Also, candidates for the Earned Recognition pilot scheme are eligible to receive free compliance help from a DVSA telephone contact, support that won’t be available once the pilot ends on 31 March 2018. For those applicants that do not quite measure up during the original assessment, “we work with them to get them to improve those areas where they are slightly below par. Any sensible regulator would like to do that with those people who are prepared to improve, really,” says Llewellyn.

Looking forward even farther, there might be an additional benefit in store for those in Earned Recognition. Over the next five years, DVSA will investigate whether those operators might be able to test and certify their own trucks, without having to go to an ATF.

Llewellyn concludes: “Rather than being a monopolistic service provider and an enforcement agency, we’re trying to do a lot more in providing education, advice and guidance to the extent that people can keep themselves safe.” 



FURTHER INFORMATION

- ER IT system providers – <https://is.gd/suhopo>
- ER audit providers – <https://is.gd/axixab>
- DVSA Strategy, 2017-2022 – <https://is.gd/xexiqu>