



Troublesome

Would you know what to do, in the event of a van or truck breakdown at the roadside?

Dan Gilkes offers advice on prescribed procedures and protocols

There can be few worse feelings for a truck driver than the realisation that something is wrong with his vehicle while on the move. But, whether caused by a mechanical or electrical fault, or a tyre failure, what the driver does next should be governed by the operator's standard safe procedures.

"It would be best practice for the driver to park his or her vehicle in the safest possible location, in anticipation of the repair work to be carried out," suggests Richard Byrne, group health, safety and environment manager at ATS Euromaster. "If they are at the roadside, or on a motorway hard shoulder, then they should switch on their hazard warning lights. Vehicle headlights should also be on during the hours of darkness or in bad weather."

Byrne also stresses the need to don high visibility clothing after exiting from the nearside of the vehicle. "Once outside, they should safely position their warning triangle and then stand on the nearside embankment or roadside to the front of the vehicle and contact emergency roadside assistance."

For most fleet drivers, certainly those with newer trucks, that will usually lead to a manufacturer's call centre handling the whole incident. They will assign the breakdown to the nearest suitable dealer and keep the customer in touch with the repair. "Scania Assistance handles around 40,000 cases per year," comments Paul Frost, the Swedish manufacturer's

customer support manager. That doesn't, however, mean that there are Scania trucks breaking down all over the place, as the service covers a wide variety of fleets and an equally wide range of issues. "We have a huge number of R&M agreements on trailers, buses and coaches, as well as trucks, which is why those figures are high," explains Frost.

But whoever comes to provide assistance – whether a dealer technician, a fleet's own service fitter or a non-dealer engineer – all personnel working at the side of the road should then follow a clear, safe procedure. Though not specifically regulated by the HSE (Health and Safety Executive), that organisation has an obvious interest in roadside recovery, not least because it estimates that there are up to 10 deaths in the UK every year that involve people working on vehicles at the side of the road.

The HSE therefore makes a number of recommendations for companies employing roadside technicians, and that includes tyre and windscreen replacement fitters. It recommends that safe systems of work should be devised to ensure the safety of workers and the occupants of vehicles being repaired or recovered. Winches and cranes, in particular, are subject to health and safety legislation and they should be checked and operated safely. Above all, all risks, especially those presented by other road users, should be properly assessed and safe systems for working at the roadside prepared.

ADR recovery rules of the road



The driver remains responsible for the vehicle and its load; they are deemed to know what they are carrying and how to deal with it. Attending technicians should have



completed a roadside awareness course, as well as a tanker awareness training course. In addition, they should hold an ADR qualification, if the vehicle is to be road tested. Personnel



attending a tanker should not smoke and mobile phones should only be used within the service van. No 'hot

work' should ever be carried out near the vehicle. Inspection lamps and torches should be checked and safe. You should not start an ADR vehicle using jump leads. Only an



approved jump pack or Anderson leads fitted to the vehicle should be used. Technicians dealing with Pet-Reg



vehicles should be aware that they may incorporate special electrical equipment. All electrics should be isolated at the battery master switch before any electrical repairs are undertaken. The tanker should never be detached



from the tractor without the express permission of the driver and the operator. Indeed, to keep weight to

a minimum, some tankers do not have landing legs, which makes uncoupling impossible, without special stands. If it is necessary to recover the vehicle, it



should not be taken to a dealer's own facility, unless the dealership has safe and adequate facilities to

accommodate a tanker. If it is a loaded fuel tanker, the technician should arrange recovery to the tanker's home location or the nearest fuel terminal.

trucks

In addition, PPE (personal protective equipment), such as high visibility clothing, appropriate footwear and gloves, should be provided and used. And technicians should be adequately trained by a competent trainer to work safely at the roadside. The Institute of Vehicle Recovery (IVR) has published a series of videos to help train roadside technicians.

All technicians – again, including tyre fitters – attending roadside incidents should be properly trained to deal with what can be a very dangerous situation. "All our roadside callouts are attended by ATS Euromaster technicians trained specifically in roadside breakdown techniques to City & Guilds status," reveals Byrne.

Dealers and recovery agents should also be aware that there are additional precautions that should be taken when attending petrochemical tankers and similar vehicles in the ADR category. While all dealers should be able to attend to a vehicle's running gear fault, technicians should have attended not just a roadside awareness course, but also, where possible, specific road tanker safety awareness training.

ADR and recovery

MAN has a growing share of the petrochemical tanker industry in the UK and has placed special emphasis on training its dealer technicians to cope with tanker breakdowns – recently running a training roadshow around the country to update technicians. Similarly, Scania Assistance also trains its technicians to cope specifically with ADR incidents – focusing on ADR recovery rules of the road.

"We have a standard roadside recovery training course at Swindon, but felt there was a need for better understanding of roadside recovery, particularly

on petrochemical tankers," explains Paul O'Cain, general manager of field service operations at MAN. And Scania's Frost adds: "We've appointed one recovery operator as our approved ADR certified agent and that ensures there is only ever recovery by a suitably qualified person."

The police or, more likely, the Highways Agency (HA) will certainly want to know about a vehicle stopped at the side of a busy motorway. And, while technicians might feel safer with cones warning other road users of the broken down vehicle, the HA will not look kindly on anyone coning off a vehicle in a live lane: cones are allowed only behind the truck.

Frost says his men will call out the Highways Agency, if they need them, and then decide between them on the safest procedure. Meanwhile, ATS Euromaster's Byrne comments: "We aim to notify the HA in advance [of attending] that we have been requested to assist a vehicle at the roadside." And he adds: "All of our mobile vans carry a driver handbook, giving local contact details for the HA in their area. We will specifically request the Highways Agency's help, if the broken down vehicle is in a place that could endanger either our technician or other road users, especially where we are working on the off-side of the vehicle on a motorway."

However, while police officers are focused on keeping the situation safe, the Highways Agency's priority is to keep traffic moving. Therefore in some cases, even if it is possible to repair the truck at the roadside, the agency may insist on recovery to remove the vehicle from the busy road.

"Our experience in recent times is that, with increased awareness of terrorist threats and other dangers, they certainly don't want tankers left at the side of the road," comments Frost.

As the saying goes, there is no need to make a drama out of crisis. With appropriate planning, training and standard procedures in place, fleet operators and their drivers experiencing a problem should be able to access the right emergency service rapidly and safely, getting the truck back on the road as soon as possible. **TE**