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Safe every day

When I hear people say that they inspect their vehicles to MOT standards, I wonder. As the MOT determines minimum standards, does this mean that they are only maintaining their vehicles to the minimum? When you are operating a vehicle, it should always be road-legal. If it is taken off the road at any point, it should, with no preparation, be tested and by rights it should pass.

In the world of emergency services where I work, vehicles are exempted from the standard MOT rules, but there is a requirement for an annual inspection that is equivalent to the MOT in standards. We have our own testing bay within our in-house fleet facility.

As part of our standards, our technicians don't certify their own work. If a vehicle is due its annual inspection after being serviced, we would pass to another member of staff to undertake the check. We don't want to police our own work.

We have two systems for quality control. Internally, our maintenance supervisors carry out impromptu inspections to monitor the effectiveness of our in-house maintenance standards.

Externally, we have a contract with Logistics UK (formerly FTA) for independent inspections. This service is perfect for quality control and provides an impartial and independent vehicle assessment. Not only do its inspectors look for vehicle defects, they also identify defects that should have been reported by drivers as part of their daily checks. If the driver didn't report it, then you have found an area of non-compliance that may need further investigation.

Receiving a clean bill of health helps build assurance, confidence within the team and confirms that you have effective maintenance standards and systems.

You have to have systems in place to ensure an effective maintenance regime, and that's what we promote within IRTE. It is easy to tell someone what should be done, but it's another thing to put it into practice. Always practice what you preach.



Michael Sweetmore
President, Society of Operations Engineers

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