



**Welcome to the September 2013 edition of the ATF newsletter. With 70% of testing now carried out at non-VOSA sites, and almost 370 ATFs now open, the landscape of heavy vehicle testing has changed very quickly in recent years. We would like to pay tribute to all of our ATF partners who have helped to make this happen.**

## REGIONAL ATF FORUMS



We are pleased to announce that the dates for the next round of Regional ATF Forums have been confirmed. They are:

- ▶ Exeter - 4 November
- ▶ Cardiff - 5 November
- ▶ Birmingham - 11 November
- ▶ Glasgow - 14 November
- ▶ Heathrow - 18 November
- ▶ Ipswich - 28 November

We will be sending you an invite very soon with full details of each Forum.

We'll also be conducting a survey of all ATFs in the near future to help us see how we can continue to improve our service to you. We'll be asking you about all aspects of running your ATF and how you think things can be improved. So please start to think about what issues most matter to you and do take the time to respond when we get in touch.

In the meantime please enjoy this edition of the newsletter and if you've got any comments or questions, send them into us here at:

[TTPComms@vosa.gov.uk](mailto:TTPComms@vosa.gov.uk)

## Update on how we are helping you manage your contractual agreement with us



If you attended one of the Regional ATF Forums in May you might remember we spoke about how we should maximise VOSA staff time whilst they're working at your ATFs. In the ATF contract we all signed, there is a 'fair usage' clause that deals with productivity.

When working with our ATF operator partners (of which there are now nearly 370) it is as important to us as it is to you that you get equal service from VOSA. So to help deliver that equality of service, we produced an internal Station Manager ATF Framework to explain what we meant by a reasonable level of fair usage. This attracted a small number of queries so it's probably useful to explain it a little more in this newsletter.

Firstly, the contract itself has not changed. The fair usage clause has always existed. The guidance was designed to aid our Station Managers and ensure consistency. So there is now a framework in place for our Managers to apply and to use in discussions with ATF operators.

There was a small number of ATF operators who were consistently under-utilising our inspectors' time, but others needed more to satisfy demand. By using the framework to discuss fair usage with those less productive ATFs, we have managed to improve our effectiveness quite amicably. Our plan was to have a 'soft launch' first to help ATF operators better utilise not just our staff, but their test lanes as well. Further steps were only to be

taken to help address those ATF operators unable to respond to improve fair usage, but that hasn't been required thankfully. By working through the framework together we have, so far, achieved the objective of increasing productivity. Across the national network our productivity rate is around 91% at the moment.

If further action is required with an ATF it is not a foregone conclusion that we will withdraw our staff or the ATF. There is a process to go through which involves our contract experts in HQ. We always aim to use a pragmatic, common sense approach to ensure that truck and bus customers get the best service possible.

And that is the whole point.

This framework is not just about effective VOSA staff deployment. It's about ATF operators sweating their expensive assets to get the most out of them. It's also ultimately about truck and bus customers getting better service in more reasonable time scales, and in a consistent manner. This is what the ATF contract and our Station Manager Framework is delivering and we hope it will continue.

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## VOSA fee consultation now closed

VOSA closed its consultation on 2013 fee proposals mid June. We introduced a digital response on this occasion and in total received a four fold increase in responses.



VOSA's Head of Regulatory Change and Fees, John MacLellan, said: "The outcome of the fee consultation for HGV and PSV testing, operator licensing, other VOSA services and some Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA – responsible for licensing and testing vehicles and drivers in Northern Ireland) services is currently being analysed. It will be published once ministers have considered the views and what action they intend to take."

# Presenting Longer Semi-Trailers (LST) for Annual Test

You may already be aware that the [Department for Transport](#) has introduced a ten year trial on the operation of longer semi trailers and been approached for an annual test booking.

As these trailers do not meet the 'tri-axle' definition as specified in [The Road Vehicles \(Authorised Weight\) Regulations 1998 \(AWR\), SI 1998 No. 3111, Regulation 2](#) they **must** be presented and tested in a laden condition.

We therefore ask you to remind your booking staff of the importance of correctly identifying trailers and allowing sufficient time to present them in a suitable condition for test.

Instructions have been issued to our testing staff regarding the correct identification and testing of these vehicles to ensure continued consistency in our application of test standards.



Example of a longer semi trailer.

## 2014 Annual booking process

This year's process is being managed and conducted by a dedicated team from VOSA.

It is very important you take this opportunity to request and reserve VOSA testing staff to conduct statutory testing duties at your ATF via the annual booking process. Requests made by any other means are significantly less likely to be met.

All ATFs should have received their 2014 annual booking forms. Please ensure you complete and return your requests in line with the guidance provided.

Please direct all enquiries to: [VOSA- Annual Booking Process Management](#)

## Simplifying the heavy vehicle test

VOSA has completed its investigation into simplifying heavy vehicle test procedures. The aim is to reduce the burden on both operators and VOSA without compromising road safety or the environment.



### Option to jack

We have concluded that the steered axles on trucks, buses and some trailers can be correctly assessed by using the heavy duty wheel play detectors and feeler gauges without jacking the axle – similar to the practice used by most of Europe.

But not every vehicle can be assessed this way, so where necessary, an examiner will have the option to jack the axle to make an assessment. We have also identified that some vehicles with independent front suspension can only be tested properly by jacking. So, for a small number of vehicles jacking will continue.

### Emissions test

There is an extremely low failure rate for the emissions test. Our investigation showed that in most cases a visual assessment would give exactly the same result. Current Diesel Smoke Meter (DSM) technology struggles to cope with modern, clean engines. The European Commission is looking at new testing equipment for the future to test for smaller particulate

matter and oxides of Nitrogen. So, until new equipment is available we will be restricting the use of DSMs to those vehicles where smoke levels appear marginal. Any vehicle that fails the visual emissions test will have a metered test. Vehicles submitted for reduced pollution or low emissions tests will always receive a DSM test.

## Simplify

The conclusion of our investigation, after consulting with manufacturers and trade bodies, is that we will be simplifying the test by allowing examiners the discretion not to jack steered axles or conduct a metered smoke test.

## Making the change

We will monitor and analyse the introduction of these changes, which are scheduled from 1 October 2013. The heavy vehicle inspection manuals will be updated when these changes are introduced.

Email [enquiries@vosa.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@vosa.gov.uk) for further information on these changes.

## ATF E-BULLETIN

Please let us know if the information in this e-bulletin is valuable to you and if so, how often you'd like to receive it. You can do this via our inbox: [TTPComms@vosa.gov.uk](mailto:TTPComms@vosa.gov.uk)

Many thanks to those of you who volunteered to become more practically involved in making improvements and trialling ideas; we have your details on record. In fact some of you may already have been contacted by VOSA staff.



## VOSA ALERTS

Please also remember that the only way to get regular ATF VOSA alerts with timely reminders about policy changes, consultations or service changes is to subscribe to VOSA Direct via VOSA's website: [www.gov.uk/vosa](http://www.gov.uk/vosa)

Please continue to feed back your suggestions and areas of concern. Your comments will help us improve the ATF experience and of course we will keep you informed on the latest developments.