



ATF FORUM SUCCESS !

Welcome to the third edition of VOSA's ATF e-bulletin highlighting important issues, sharing progress on your ideas, updating you on recent announcements and finding solutions to improve things in the future.

Thank you to all those who attended the Regional ATF Forums which were held at different venues around the country last November. In total nearly 200 ATF operators came to the Forums to get the latest ATF news from VOSA, share experiences with other operators and give their feedback. We used the Forums as an opportunity to offer help and advice in resolving the issues you have told us about.

You told us that you thought these regional events were really useful.

We're already well under way in planning the next round of Regional ATF Forums. The dates for the next forums are:

- ▶ 9th May - Glasgow
- ▶ 13th May - Birmingham
- ▶ 14th May - Leeds
- ▶ 15th May - Heathrow
- ▶ 16th May - Ipswich
- ▶ 22nd May - Ilminster
- ▶ 23rd May - Cardiff

We will be sending you an invitation to attend one of the events very soon.



In the meantime, if you have any issues and concerns please let us know by contacting your local management team or by emailing us at: TTPComms@vosa.gov.uk

'Find your nearest ATF service' launches in March

To help your customers, we've been developing a web tool which will help them to find their nearest ATF.

Your customers will soon be able to carry out a simple search to find their nearest ATF on the Government website www.gov.uk

We are in the final stages of checking all open access ATF data is correct and providing the

new Government website with data to publish in a "Find your nearest" search. All open access ATFs should have received an email requesting confirmation or amendment of their details.

The reason for the slight delay is that we had to be sure that contact details and permissions are accurate as some ATFs do not provide an open access service.

The plan is that the application will go live at the beginning of March. We will send a link to this through the usual VOSA communications channels (e-Moving on and VOSA Direct news alerts).

We believe this will be a useful tool for your customers and should compliment you own promotional activities.

If you haven't received an email, and you think you should have, contact:

ATFcontractqueries@vosa.gov.uk

Top tips for running an efficient test lane

At VOSA we know that managing an efficient test lane is not easy when starting out. We want to help all ATFs make the most of their asset. Here are a few simple tips...



1. When accepting bookings always make sure the customer is clear about what type of vehicle they are booking - if you don't know what kind of vehicle is coming in, what does turn up can have a huge impact on your throughput.
2. Ask if customers want to hire weights/loaded trailers at the time of booking. Ask them to be on site early to be loaded if required. This will avoid unnecessary delays on the test lane.
3. Provide a banksman (reversing assistant). This will ensure smooth running of the lane with vehicles getting loaded for test as another finishes. A smooth and constant workflow through your lane will save precious time.
4. If a customer cancels, try to ensure you have a back-up vehicle to take the slot. Book your own vehicles for end of day and then you can bring forward if needed or contact a customer nearby who can come in at short notice.
5. Keep an eye on your Pre Funded Account to ensure there are sufficient funds to cover your bookings – don't forget your reservation fee is being taken the week before.
6. Work with your local testing manager, especially when you are a new ATF. They are there to help, advise and support you.
7. If someone is late for a test it is your decision if the vehicle is tested. Speak to the examiner to see if he can accommodate it – in most cases they will fit it in but be aware that the examiner may have to leave on time. Make customers aware at the time of booking that they must be punctual. Customers who are late impact on your utilisation.

VOSA test timing exercise



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VOSA has commissioned a work measurement study of Heavy Goods and Public Service Vehicle Annual testing.

The purpose of the exercise is to make sure we have up to date, accurate timings. VOSA last carried out timing exercises in 2006 and 2008.

With almost 60% of all annual tests now being conducted at Authorised Testing Facilities (ATF), we will focus the study on work carried out at these locations, but will also include observations at our own premises in the exercise.

The Department for Transport's own In House Analytical Consultancy (IHAC) will select the locations to be visited to ensure a random statistically correct sample is captured. The observations will start in January 2013 and will be complete by May 2013.

External engineers from Scott Grant Ltd, will conduct the bulk of the timing observations. If your site is selected then you will be

approached by your local VOSA test station manager prior to the visit to ensure all site procedures are met. The timings will be captured by shadowing the VOSA Vehicle Inspector whilst he or she conducts a live inspection, all aspects of the testing day will be captured. There will be no disruption to the work of the ATF and we are not looking at anything else ATFs do as part of their other business.

As part of the exercise the VOSA trade unions are involved throughout the process. For this exercise the VOSA trade unions have nominated Mr Robert Morton, who is a Vehicle Inspector based in Mitcham, to represent the interests of all three unions throughout this project.

For further information, or if you have any questions around this exercise, please get in touch with alan.coombs@vosa.gov.uk, who is the co-ordinating the exercise.

Reminder: Take part in DfT consultation

Don't forget to have your say on how Motoring Services, such as driving tests and vehicle licensing, could be better delivered.

On 13th December the Department for Transport published a consultation setting out the broad direction for the future of its four motoring services executive agencies: Driving Standards Agency, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Vehicle and Operator Services Agency and the Vehicle Certification Agency.

The consultation closes on 7 March.

One of the key proposals which the Department is seeking views on is:

Transform HGV, bus and coach testing by expanding joint ventures and collaboration with private sector providers, and reducing the number of government owned test stations.

For more information and to have your say go to: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/motoring-services-strategy>

300th ATF Opens



Bus, coach and truck operators now have more choice than ever of where to go for annual tests as VOSA announces the opening of the 300th Authorised Testing Facility (ATF). Almost 60% of all tests are now carried out at private sites away from VOSA's own test stations.

VOSA presented Stuarts Truck & Bus in Plymouth with a certificate on Wednesday (9 January) to commemorate the fact that it had opened the 300th ATF.

VOSA Chief Executive Alastair Peoples said:

"This is another significant milestone in the transformation of bus, coach and truck testing. The first ATF opened in January 2010. Just three years later, there are now 300 with nearly 60% of tests conducted at non-VOSA sites."

Finances

Please keep on top of your finances or you may be in breach of your contract.

In order for us to be able to provide a consistent and fair service to all, it is important for all ATFs to respect their contractual obligations, most particularly in the following key areas:

1. Utilisation

VOSA has limited resources. ATFs are required to respect the fair usage policy and avoid under utilisation of examiners time. ATFs that don't make full use of their testing periods are more likely to be charged a Reservation Fee, and are also booking staff that could have been allocated to another ATF who could have filled the period.

2. Cancellation of Testing Periods with less than 7 days notice

ATFs are obliged to give VOSA no less than 7 full days notice of cancellation. We do try to be understanding when testing periods have to be cancelled at short notice however we have noticed examples where a pattern has emerged with cancellations becoming a regular occurrence. In these cases we have to take a stronger line. For us to allow growth at ATFs, this situation is not sustainable as we have limited resources which could be allocated elsewhere with a fair amount of notice. This will benefit the end customer as much as VOSA and ATFs.

3. Finance: Failed draw-downs from PFA

The effects of ATFs having insufficient funds available in their account when draw-downs are made causes a substantial amount of additional administration effort for VOSA. Please ensure there are sufficient funds in your account 7 full days prior to a Confirmed Reservation. This is another area where will be exercising our contractual rights to avoid contravening HM Treasury rules on Managing Public Money.

Thank you for your co-operation.

You said: "The VOSA cancellation policy appears to contradict the ATF cancellation policy"

A number of you raised this point at the Regional ATF Forums. We were asked why the cancellation for a test at and GVTs is three working days, yet ATFs are obliged to give seven working days notice to cancel a tester.

The reason is that at a Goods Vehicle Test Station we are only accepting the cancellation of a single test. When an ATF cancels a full day's booking, it is around 10 tests. VOSA has limited resources and this could be put to use elsewhere.

Next Generation Testing

With over 300 ATFs up and running and almost 60% of tests being carried out at non-VOSA sites, we've been planning how we can continue to provide an excellent testing service well into the future.

Those of you who attended the Regional ATF Forums will be aware that we ran a prototype in Summer 2012 which involved seven testers based at Avonmouth (Bristol) GVTs and six local ATFs. The testers worked outside of normal hours giving the ATFs a more flexible choice of testing hours.

Both the testers and the ATFs involved in the prototype agreed that it was a success.



The VOSA Board has now agreed to progress those successfully piloted ideas nationally and a project team has been set up to roll-out Next Generation Testing.

Former Operations Director Alex Fiddes has been appointed to the post of Next Generation Testing Director.

We are now in a period of discussion with the Trade Union and the Department for Transport to agree the details and will be giving you a further progress report at the next Regional ATF Forums on May.

Update on VOSA's Pre-Funded Account service

You said in the Regional ATF Forums that you were unaware that VOSA offered a service via the internet to look up your Pre Funded Account balance.

To address this matter VOSA contacted over 200 ATFs that were not registered for the online service.

This resulted in 39 customers registering for the service with another 104 stating an interest in future take up.

For ATF Pre Funded Accounts the on-line service does not provide testing transactional information, but it will allow customers to access their balance and instantly top up the account by credit/debit card.

For enquires concerning the VOSA Pre Funded Account Service please call **0300 123 9000**.

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

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

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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.dft.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.