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Department of Transport
An Roinn Iompair



Circular letter 19/04

24th November 2004

Vehicle Testing

Dear Manager,

The headline target of the Road Safety Strategy 2004 - 2006 is to reduce road deaths to no more than 300 by 2006 representing a 25% reduction on the average number of road deaths between 1998 and 2003. While the strategy primarily focuses on road users behaviour it does contain a number of measures related to the safety of vehicles one of which concerns vehicle testing.

Since its introduction in the 1980s for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) and the early 1990s for Light Goods Vehicles (LGV), compulsory roadworthiness testing of motor vehicles has not only helped to improve the standards of vehicles in use but has contributed to changing public attitudes towards vehicle maintenance. Because of testing, vehicle owners are now more conscious of the importance of regular vehicle safety checks and servicing of vehicles in line with manufacturers recommendations. The effectiveness of commercial vehicle testing is due in no small part to local authorities through their role in appointing and supervising authorised vehicle testers.

The provision of a service operating to the highest international standards is a key objective of public policy in relation to vehicle testing. In line with this objective a major reorganisation of the arrangements for the testing of

commercial vehicles was approved by the then Minister of State in August 2003. The reforms are extensive and involve considerable investment by authorised testers over the next few years as they upgrade equipment and premises to comply with modern standards.

Implementation of the reforms has already commenced with an initiative on training and a change in the frequency of testing for LGVs so that all commercial vehicles are liable to testing when 1 year old and every year thereafter. Further reforms will take effect next month with other elements of the programme scheduled for implementation at various times over the next 4 years. These reforms will help to ensure that vehicle safety is enhanced through having an effective modern vehicle testing regime.

The supervisory role exercised by local authorities will be vitally important in ensuring delivery of a modern high quality vehicle testing service. The monitoring of performance against specific standards will require the continued and active involvement of local authority authorised officers. In this regard the Department wishes to acknowledge the commitment and dedication shown by these officers in performing their duties and appreciates the enthusiasm with which local authorities have responded to the reforms. The role of authorised officer for vehicle testing is an important and responsible one with road safety at its core. It is, therefore, vitally important that, in each county and city council which is a vehicle testing authority (i.e. a motor tax authority), an **authorised officer for vehicle testing** is appointed. In this regard, the person to be appointed should be knowledgeable concerning the mechanical aspects of vehicles, particularly commercial vehicles.

The principal duty of an authorised officer is to ensure that the standard of vehicle testing carried out by authorised testers appointed by the council conforms to the standards laid down by the Department. This involves regular visits to the premises of authorised testers to inspect test equipment, test report forms, and to audit pass statements. I enclose for information an outline of the general duties of an authorised officer for vehicle testing. Given

the enhanced status of road safety through the Road Safety Strategy, the Department would request managers to review the resource provision to their authorised officer for vehicle testing to ensure that it is sufficient to enable him/her to effectively perform their duties.

Yours sincerely,

D. Coppins

Principal Officer

Vehicle Standards and Motor Insurance Division

To each City and County Manager

C.C: To each Authorised Officer for Vehicle Testing.

Duties of Authorised Officers

1. To ensure that roadworthiness tests in the county are carried out according to the Vehicle Testers Manual using the specified calibrated equipment by testers listed on the register of testers for the category of vehicle being tested.
2. To process applications to be an Authorised Tester following the Guidelines on Premises and Equipment issued by the Department of Transport.
3. To process applications from Authorised Testers for training of Testers.
4. To investigate complaints regarding testing in their area and where necessary to examine or oversee the examination of vehicles concerned.
5. To attend meetings as required by the Department of Transport.

As part of their duties Authorised Officers will be required to:

- a) Visit each Test Centre at least once per month to see Full Test carried out
- b) Visit again in same month to check Appendix 6 of the guidelines for Premises & Equipment (Audit List).
- c) Check that premises are clean and painted
- d) Check that equipment is present, working and calibrated
- e) Check that records are up to date for each pass and fail issued
- f) Check that all vehicles tested are issued with result on premises
- g) Check the Audit System on premises is working
- h) To meet the person responsible for testing
- i) Ensure that on visits of inspection any departure from correct testing procedure is the subject of a warning in writing from Authorised Office and on a third warning the result books should be withdrawn until the difficulty is resolved. Serious shortcomings in test standard should result in closure of testing and a full appraisal done by Authority Officer to decide future position.