

Van Excellence

– not just a ‘tick-box’ exercise



Now in its third year of operation, FTA’s *Van Excellence* is rapidly heading towards its 100th accredited member to the scheme, but there is certainly no room for complacency, as Mark Cartwright, FTA’s Head of Vans is keen to point out to van operators.

Van Excellence is ‘what good looks like’ when it comes to operating a van, offering best practice guidance for working safely, legally and efficiently and is designed to help both raise and improve standards across van operations. But it shouldn’t stop there.

Now is not the time for a van operator to sit back, relax and think that all is wonderful in the world. It may well be that they are an accredited member of *Van Excellence* which in itself is great, but there’s certainly no room for complacency.

Van Excellence is definitely not just a ‘tick-box’ exercise, as my own school report would often reflect: ‘Mark Cartwright – a trier – but there’s always room for improvement.’

Last month, at the *Van Excellence* conference in Dunblane, a representative of the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) repeated the message that the Agency will be focusing its attention on operational standards of vans across the UK and the van world generally, and van operators should expect a ‘Reality Check Ahead.’ VOSA has made no secret of the fact that it is determined to improve standards of van operation and of its intention to significantly ramp up the number of roadside inspections and its other enforcement activity.

This is just one of the issues facing van operators on a day-to-day basis, so ensuring that their house is in order should be part and parcel of their work.

The *Van Excellence Code* represents the current minimum best practice standards required to ensure the safe operation of van fleets regardless of fleet size or their industry sector.

As part of the *Code*, signatories undertake to ensure all vans in their operation are roadworthy and specifically require the performance of regular pre-use defect checks. Drivers must also record any identified defects, which must be assessed by a competent person and, where required, the appropriate rectification work carried out. A clear audit trail must be maintained to demonstrate this process is being satisfactorily performed and drivers must be trained to carry out these checks.

Maintenance is vital for all vehicles, and the *Code* therefore dictates that maintenance cycles must be assessed and performed when appropriate by operators for their vehicles, and any ancillary equipment, in light of operational demands and manufacturers’ recommendations. In this case the manufacturer’s recommended service levels will equate to the minimum acceptable standard to meet the requirements of the *Van Excellence Code*.

The good news is that in my role at FTA I work very closely with van operators every day, and there is no doubt that more and more van operators are realising the need to ensure that their fleets are compliant as is reflected in the number of accredited members to the *Van Excellence* scheme, proving that operators are entirely capable of self regulation.



It’s a shame my school teachers couldn’t have said the same about me “Must try harder.”

To find out more about the *Van Excellence* scheme log on to: www.vanexcellence.co.uk



BT Fleet



ROUTEMOKY®

TOMTOM