

Tipping the balance

Due to the DVSA Special Notice that arrived on 21st December 2020, Barry Babister, Managing Director of MOT Juice, believes the balance of power has shifted. Here, he sets out why.

Over the past few years, I have been inundated with vehicle testing station (VTS) owners who claim they have not seen or heard from a DVSA Vehicle Examiner (VE) in years. This laissez-faire attitude may have been fuelled by a reduction in site visits, but should not be taken as a sign of a lack of accountability or of weakness.

We live in a digital world where every piece of MOT-related information is readily available to the bright young minds working at the DVSA. No longer do we need the traditional VE pounding the workshop floors of MOT bays nationwide. Modern techniques allow hardened DVSA enforcement teams to guide computer analysts and electronically profile the 'bad eggs', whom they must seek to remove from the industry. So, if they have the information, surely all they need is the power to enact their will? Welcome Special Notice 3-20. First, please read the following extract carefully:

'DVSA will stop testing at a site if the shortcomings found, impact the quality of testing. The site will be prevented from testing until the shortcomings are rectified.'

This line alone should be enough, but let's take it one bite at a time.

'DVSA will stop testing at a site if the shortcomings found, impact the quality of testing.'

Here's the scenario...

At the MOT Juice offices, our support teams are focused right now on ensuring that all our clients have a full five-year training record that can be produced on demand.

Let us assume that a VE pulls into your VTS, and straight away requests to see the mandatory five-year training log for each of your testers. Only one out of three testers can supply it, so you have not met the mandatory requirements, and you cannot prove your testers have been properly trained, and as such, the less than impressed VE closes your VTS. The VE has no interest in leniency, so let us imagine that they keep on looking...

They find three diesel emissions printouts that do not have the correct engine temperature, and therefore identify multiple shortcomings that could impact the quality of testing, which results in immediate temporary cessation. They find three tyre tread depth gauges in your MOT bay, but you can only supply a calibration record for one gauge. Again, multiple shortcomings, and therefore cessation.

They find that you have no QC check records for a few of your testers, resulting in shortcomings of a mandatory task which could then be argued could affect the quality of testing.

It does not really matter if your testers are any good, it just matters whether the VE considers that your 'shortcomings' could

affect the testing standards. These shortcomings are literally anything that does not meet the standards as set out by the DVSA, and the updates and guidance are becoming increasingly frequent, and sanctions that lead to the disciplinary process more severe.

Now, read and understand this:

'A formal disciplinary repute case will start when multiple occurrences of the same shortcoming(s) are found over a five-year period.'

Please do not dismiss this lightly. It means that a VE is looking at your performance over five years.

If you don't have your own house in order, then get a quality management system in now, and at least start using it so that you can display contrition and willingness to try to comply. If you have ever upset your local VE then I wish you luck.

And, remember that it is a combined responsibility that you need to demonstrate to the VE; does the business owner or the AE have control and are the testers within working correctly? Time to hold hands and work together!

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