



Maintaining accountability

MOT fail rates are currently at around 10%, leading to an increase of vehicle and trailer prohibition. The DVSA published research, concluded from roadside checks, which showed that operators using external workshops have a greater than 78% chance of receiving a prohibition.

Although there are several accreditation schemes available for workshops, until now there has been no single rating scheme that differentiates all workshops – from manufacturers' dealerships, independent workshops, down to man-with-a-shed organisations – in terms of competency levels of staff and range of facilities available.

"We discussed in our engineering forums why prohibitions go up the further away from an MOT you get, especially for those who outsource maintenance," says Phil Lloyd, head of engineering policy, Logistics UK.

"We decided that perhaps it was time to put an element of accountability

Since July 2024, the Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme has been piloted to produce a way to score workshops on their competence and facilities.

Tom Austin-Morgan finds out how the pilot is progressing

onto workshops because, under operator licensing, the accountability for maintenance lies with the operator, even though they may outsource to a third-party provider. With a rating scheme we can do that."

The Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme (MPRS) has been developed by Logistics UK, RHA, CPT, IRTE, SMMT, BVRLA, NFDA and is backed by the Office of the Traffic Commissioner, DVSA and DfT to improve industry standards and professional practices in commercial vehicle maintenance.

Nick Elliott, chair of IRTE Professional Sector Council, says: "We've got people around the table from industry, as well as

from the IRTE and SOE, who understand what's necessary and needed. With the help of Logistics UK and SMMT, we're bringing all these minds together to get the collective good from it."

MPRS will provide workshops – from single person outfits to international dealers – with a rating of Low, Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum to identify the standard of knowledge and service a workshop provides.

Aaron Peters, head of technical, engineering and policy at the RHA, says the pilot has opened up the avenues to what is acceptable in workshops. "Overall, the scheme gives us a good understanding of how a workshop is equipped," he said. "There is space to gain further output in the future."

Lloyd points out that the MPRS is not an accreditation, it merely states the standards of both the people and the facility. Whichever part is rated lowest – people or facilities – decides the level the workshop is given.

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MPRS

Maintenance Provision Rating Scheme

you'll be scored low," Lloyd says. "The idea is that a transport manager can look at a workshop's rating and decide quickly: if two workshops are charging the same amount but one is rated Platinum and the other Silver, the choice should be simple."

QUALITY ASSURANCE

As workshops go through the standards, the requirements build. At Low level for staff competency, the basic requirement is that at least one member of staff must have taken an inspection course within five years and is continuing with ongoing CPD that aligns with the inspections. At Platinum level, all staff must have undertaken the basic inspection course.

At Low level for facilities, workshops must have some hard level standing of workshop availability with arrangements in place with other facilities for more demanding applications. At Platinum, workshops must have an authorised testing facility (ATF) which is required to conduct MOTs.

"As we move up there are greater numbers of people that need to be trained and, if you're offering service levels for gas and electric vehicles, there needs to be more people trained at the different levels," Lloyd explains. "As we go further, we have a quality assurance process and a management process."

"At the higher levels, facilities need to be under cover with fume extraction, roller brake testing equipment - and, again, the requirements ratchet up as the levels increase."

Elliott says there was one area of concern during the initial pilot process:

"The OEMs, quite rightly, are proud of their quality systems, inspection processes, policies and strategy in terms of brand image and customer experience. There's an inference of 'who are you to tell us what is and isn't good?'"

"We've had to engage with them, spend time and effort to include them, and advise that the sector is not trying to impress upon them that they must go along these lines. That said, with the support of the Office of the Traffic Commissioners, we all need to recognise that there's a higher level to the MPRS and the OEMs should be as much involved in it as smaller workshops."

VIEW FROM THE MANUFACTURER

Daimler Truck UK was the first of the major manufacturers to take part in the MPRS pilot as it had a pre-existing partnership with Logistics UK on the launch of its own independent quality audits across its dealer network in 2023.

Amy Carter, head of product, Daimler Truck UK, says: "A lot of the elements that are covered in the MPRS were similar to how we were already auditing our dealer network. Another reason was that it's important to us to make sure our customers know that our dealer network is providing the right level of service for looking after their vehicles. We think it's a great initiative and is long overdue."

The MPRS steering group was given access to 20 of Daimler Truck UK's franchised locations to conduct audits and, in return, the manufacturer was able to provide the steering group with feedback on the audit

process to benefit the scheme.

Carter says there were no surprises for Daimler Truck in terms of learnings on the quality of its maintenance procedures, but it did reinforce the need for regular staff training and the importance to its customers to know that the staff working on their vehicles are continually trained through CPD and are up to date with the latest standards for inspecting, maintaining and repairing commercial vehicles.

Before the MPRS there was no signposting of the quality of a particular workshop's service level and a lot of operators went on word-of-mouth recommendations. "It also allows customers to understand what they're getting for their money," Carter states.

"The MPRS is based on the facilities, and the training and competency of technicians, so you can see where that extra money is going when you use a franchise dealer over an independent workshop. You're paying for the facilities like ATF, headlight beam testers, brake testers, and for the technicians to be trained on the latest technology."

Lloyd adds it was not difficult to modify the check sheet Daimler Truck uses for its own audits to incorporate the standards developed for the MPRS.

"The trial was a success," Lloyd says. "We've recently extended it, and DAF Trucks and Volvo have registered to become involved in further trials for the rest of 2024."

RATING SYSTEM

Once the MPRS is launched at the Commercial Vehicle Show at the NEC in April 2025, workshops of any size can choose to apply for a rating scheme - but, because it is not a government regulation, rather an industry initiative, it will not be compulsory.

Levels Low and Bronze are self-assessed, with evidence provided by workshops to IRTE, and Silver to Platinum are assessed by an independent

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auditor that will report their findings to IRTE which will host the results on its platforms. Elliott says: “Platinum level is perfect, Silver is slightly less perfect; the system will allow transport managers to make informed choices about who they use to maintain their vehicles to keep them roadworthy and safe.

“You could use a Platinum rated workshop, but you may pay three times more than a Gold rated one that you have history with and can demonstrate that you have never had any problems with maintenance outcomes, including MOT pass rates. To my mind, that kind of proactive consideration - and demonstrable positive results in terms of vehicle condition - would satisfy the regulatory authorities.”

BUILD MOMENTUM

Traffic commissioners will likely encourage organisations to take part in the MPRS and could make it a requirement for those workshops that are failing to comply with their operating licence to establish what their rating is.

Currently, there are no KPIs in the scheme for independent validation of MOT pass rate, for example. But Lloyd says these will be introduced later once the scheme is up and running.

“We want to encourage people to progress,” says Lloyd. “They may not choose to go for it because they may come out as a Low or Bronze level, which is probably not what they want to be. But it will then give them an aspiration where they can work to attain a higher level.

“The standard allows them to identify improvements for their staff and the procurement of certain equipment, as and when they can afford to do so. It could take as little as three months to go from Low to Bronze and a little longer to get to Silver, Gold and Platinum, but we’re trying to build momentum within the industry to get better.”

Ideally, anyone seeking maintenance and repair services for their vehicle could benefit from a version

of the MPRS - not just heavy commercial and public service vehicles, but also for cars and motorcycle maintenance and MOTs, across every workshop in the UK in the future.

John Taylor, operational technical executive at the CPT, says: “The MPRS gives our members the confidence that if they do not have their own workshop facilities, they can understand the standards that they are expected to receive when they do go to an outside supplier, to maintain roadworthiness and ensure reliability and safety on the road.”

He adds that if CPT members do have their own workshops, it gives them confidence they are maintaining vehicles to a high standard by using fully trained staff with the appropriate equipment.

Elliott concludes: “I would hope that every workshop has this system of rating so that all operators have the right to choose. I don’t think every workshop will, but operators can drive this by asking workshops to get MPRS registered and if they don’t, take their business to a workshop that does.” [TE](#)

