



DRIVER & VEHICLE TESTING AGENCY

OPERATION “ROAD TEST”

Compliance Section

Sept 2004



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Awarded for excellence

**“OPERATION ROAD TEST”
SEPTEMBER 2004**

REPORT

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency exists to promote road safety and to improve the quality of the environment by implementing the Government’s policies on vehicle testing and on roadside enforcement of road traffic regulations.
- 1.2 Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency in response to ongoing industrial action by its testing staff, introduced Certificates of Temporary Exemption (CTE) for private motor vehicles from 9th August 2004.
- 1.3 At the time of introduction of CTE`s the Agency determined a need for additional enforcement to be carried out for the following reasons:
- To emphasise the need for vehicle owners to ensure that their vehicles are maintained in a roadworthy condition
 - To ascertain the current level of roadworthiness.

2 PROCESS

“Operation Road Test”, Locations and Resources Employed

- 2.1 There were two areas selected for “Operation Road Test”, the rural area chosen was Coleraine and the urban area was Belfast. Resources employed at each location included 5 enforcement staff and approximately 6 PSNI staff. Operations commenced between 10.00 and 10.30am and ran through to approximately 4.00pm. Within each area, a number of different locations were selected for road checks.

Action Taken at Locations

- 2.2 Operation questionnaires were developed and a questionnaire was completed for each vehicle checked. Each questionnaire consisted of a number of areas to be completed by enforcement staff, these included
- Information on the vehicle component check carried out
 - Information on the MOT status of the vehicle, and
 - Action taken regarding defects identified.
- 2.3 PSNI officers were asked to stop vehicles that appeared to be over 4yrs old for the purposes of the operation. Enforcement staff carried out mechanical component checks on each vehicle selected and details regarding MOT and CTE compliance were identified through liaison with DVTA HQ staff at the time. Defect notices were issued by Enforcement Staff where significant mechanical defects were detected. In such instances where these posed a road safety concern, prohibition notices were also imposed restricting continued use of the vehicle. Prosecution action was reported by DVTA staff in all circumstances where such vehicles had clearly not been maintained in a roadworthy condition.

Issues arising from the Survey

- 2.4 A number of vehicle records checked at the roadside against the BSP computer database revealed that some of the vehicles undergoing inspection did not have a valid MOT certificate in force. However, further enquiries revealed that a valid MOT disc was displayed in each instance. Further investigation of vehicle records determined that the vehicles concerned had been tested in test centres that had not yet input a full years vehicle testing data to BSP.
- 2.5 Two of the vehicles inspected could not be reconciled against either BSP or the DVLNI NIVIS database. For the purposes of analysis of information, it was decided to disregard these vehicles. It is however, worth noting that mechanical checks carried out on these vehicles found them to be roadworthy.

2.6 Vehicle checks at the Belfast operation were hampered for a number of reasons, these included:

- Heavy Rain – i.e. difficulties were experienced in the completion of questionnaires and completion of vehicle component checks
- Unroadworthy Vehicles - two vehicles were detected that appeared to be in a poor mechanical condition and 4 enforcement staff (at various times) had to leave the operation to escort the vehicles to the local test centre for a full MOT check, staff were therefore lost from the operation
- Disqualified Drivers – PSNI support at the operation was reduced when three disqualified drivers were detected, the drivers were arrested and had to be escorted to the police station.

3 RESULTS

The following tables reflect results from “Operation Road Test”; comparison figures from the Roadworthiness Report have also been shown in blue.

Table One - Roadworthiness Level

Table One

	Number	%	Roadworthiness Report %
Vehicles checked	74		
Vehicles without defects	55	74	66.6
Vehicles with defects	19	26	33.4
<i>Breakdown of Vehicles with defects</i>			
Vehicles with 1 defect	11	58	73.1
Vehicles with 2 defects	3	16	20.0
Vehicles with 3 or more defects	5	26	6.9

Table Two – Breakdown of Vehicle Status

	Vehicles in Category	Vehicles with defects
MOT Compliant	43	14
CTE in place	7	1
No MOT, No CTE	7	4
No record on system	2	0
MOT not required (Under 4)	14	0
MOT`d overseas	1	0

Table Three - Defects Present By Age

	Vehicles Checked	Vehicles with Defects	Defect Level %	Roadworthiness Report %
2000 to 2004	14	0	0	19.2
1995 to 1999	39	11	28	34.7
Pre 1995	19	8	42	39.6

Table Four - Types of Defects Identified

Type of Defect	Defects Identified	%	%
Total Defects Found	37		
Brakes	3	8.1	2.60
Exhaust			1.00
Steering	1	2.7	0.30
Lamps	21	56.8	46.00
Wheels & Tyres	3	8.1	5.80
Suspension			0
Chassis	3	8.1	3.60
Fuel & Oil Leaks			0
Miscellaneous Defects			2.60
Glass Cracked			1.90
Defective Horn			1.60
Torn Wiper Blade			4.50
Defective Washers	1	2.7	4.20
Tinted Windows			0.60
Sunstrip			1.00

<i>Other non compliance items evaluated during survey</i>			
Number Plates	5	13.5	24.2

4 COMPARISONS & CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Although the information gathered from “Operation Road Test” has been analysed to provide the Agency with information, it must be remembered that the number of records used is small and the statistical error rate will therefore be large.

Roadworthiness Level

- 4.2 Vehicle checks were carried out on 74 vehicles, the roadworthiness level was calculated as 74% and the level of non-compliance 26%. The level of non-compliance identified from “Operation Road Test” indicates confirmation of results from the earlier Roadworthiness Report. The conclusion reached from the Roadworthiness Report was that the level of non-compliance is high and “Operation Road Test” underpins this.

Vehicle Status Check

- 4.3 A key objective set for “Operation Road Test” was to identify potential problems regarding use of CTE`s. Results from the operation identified 7 vehicles with CTE`s and only one of these had a defect. The Roadworthiness Report identified vehicles with no MOT as being the most likely to have a defect and this was reflected in the findings of “Operation Road Test”. The level of defects on vehicles with a current MOT remains high with 14 of the 43 vehicles in the category identified.

Defect Level by Vehicle Age

- 4.4 In order to carry out an analysis of roadworthiness in comparison to vehicle age, the vehicles checked during “Operation Road Test” were categorised into the three age ranges used in the Roadworthiness Report. In the Roadworthiness Report, it was concluded that older cars were more likely to have a vehicle defect.

Analysis of the results collected during “Operation Road Test” indicates support for this hypothesis. The highest level of defects were detected in the pre 1995 vehicle category with a level of 42%. This reduced to 28% in the 1995 – 1999 vehicle category with no defects detected in the 2000 – 2004 vehicle category.

Analysis of Non Compliant Items detected

- 4.5 Results from the Roadworthiness Report identified the three main defects detected as being inoperative lamps, non-compliant number plates and defective tyres. Results from “Operation Road Test” indicated a similar set of results although the percentage of chassis and brake faults had increased significantly.

Analysis of BSP use at Operation

- 4.6 “Operation Road Test” piloted the use of a direct link to BSP. Enforcement staff found the link to be useful in that a number of vehicles were detected that did not have a current MOT certificate, details of these vehicles were provided to attending PSNI officers and in most cases the drivers were asked to produce insurance and MOT documents at their local police station.

Conclusions

- 4.7 Introduction of CTE`s does not appear to have significantly affected the levels of roadworthiness on Northern Ireland roads in the short term. Defect levels although still high remain at a similar level prior to industrial action.
- 4.8 “Operation Road Test” was considered a success in that two vehicles detected were found to have very serious mechanical defects. In view that both vehicles were considered a danger to road users they were prohibited from further road use and removed from the Test Centre by recovery vehicle. A number of disqualified drivers were also detected.
- 4.9 Results from “Operation Road Test” indicate confirmation of the results obtained from the recent Roadworthiness Report.