

From: *****

BY EMAIL

Tel: *****

Fax: *****

Date: 18th April 2006

Our Ref: *****

Dear *****

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

I am writing in response to your e-mail of 7th April 2006 requesting information under the above Act.

I will deal with the points you have raised in the same order as in your original e-mail.

Q1. Is there a VOSA Inspection Manual for Roadside Inspection (or equivalent) comparable to the HGV Inspection Manual issued to HGV Testing Stations? If such a publication exists what is the scope of the manual?

A1. The Categorisation of Defects manual covers this, and is available for purchase from VOSA at a cost of £25. The order form for this publication can be obtained from clicking on the following link [Publications & DVD Order Form \(PDF\)](#).

Q2. Is there a VOSA Roadside Testing Guide (or equivalent) comparable to The MOT Testing Guide issued to MOT Test Stations? If such a publication exists what is the scope of the manual?

A2. VOSA does not carry out roadside tests, only roadside examinations. These are covered by the Categorisation of Defects which is available for purchase from VOSA.

Q3. Are there published standards and recorded results for a Quality Control procedure for Roadside Testers comparable to the Quality Control program applied to Nominated Testers?

A3. VOSA operates a three tiered Quality Assurance regime, tier 1 is conducted by the local Enforcement Area management, tier 2 is conducted by specialist staff independent of the Enforcement Areas and tier three is conducted by VOSAs internal Audit branch.

2005-2006 saw the introduction of VOSA's Quality Assurance and Improvement Team which brought together VOSA's Testing Station and Enforcement staff responsible for tier two Quality Assurance and during the year work has been on going to make the two regimes more comparable

During 2005-2006 the two members of staff currently responsible for enforcement vehicle examiner tier two quality assurance have assessed 197 vehicle examiners (the largest number ever in a single year) and physically assessed 428 HGV roadside inspections. They have also remotely assessed 3327 prohibitions issued of which two were assessed as reaching a stage that could be described as an error (as defined by the Department for Transport) these resulted in the removal of 500 performance gain points for each error.

Next year an inspection error rate will be introduced when all vehicle examiners will have the quality of their inspections assessed using an 'inspection error rate' formula based on BS6001 sampling procedure for inspection by attributes acceptable quality level (AQL) for lot by lot inspection.

Q4. How many HGV Testing Stations are not equipped with either an inspection pit or suitable vehicle hoist?

A4. All of VOSA's HGV Testing Stations are equipped with an inspection pit. Some testing stations also have hoists on site, but not for use with heavy goods vehicles.

Q5. How many Roadside Inspection Stations are not equipped with either an inspection pit or suitable vehicle hoist?

A5. None of VOSA's roadside inspection sites are equipped with an inspection pit or vehicle hoist.

Q6. How many vehicle prohibitions have been issued in the last 24 months where a seized brake load compensating valve has been singly or jointly a reason for issuing the prohibition?

A6. From 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2006, a total of 3379 prohibitions were issued to either heavy or light goods vehicles where a brake valve was a reason for issue. This is not necessarily a seizure of the valve.

Q7. How many vehicle prohibitions have been issued in the last 24 months by the Ross-on-Wye Roadside Inspection Station?

A7. During the same period 1499 prohibitions have been issued at the Ross-on-Wye weighbridge site.

Q8. How many vehicle prohibitions have been issued in the last 24 months by the Ross-on-Wye Roadside Inspection Station where a seized brake load compensating valve has been singly or jointly a reason for issuing the prohibition?

A8. From 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2006, a total of 29 prohibitions were issued to either heavy or light goods vehicles where a brake valve was a reason for issue. This is not necessarily a seizure of the valve.

Q9. At HGV Testing Stations are HGVs brake performance tested laden or unladen?

Q10. If HGVs at a HGV Testing Station are brake performance tested unladen is there a procedure to test the vehicle brakes with a load simulation in order to test the brakes throughout the full range of the vehicle weight?

A9 & 10. It is our aim in VOSA to conduct an effective check of the performance of vehicle and trailer brakes in all cases. We also aim to inconvenience presenters and operators as little as possible. On many vehicles and trailers our load simulator provides sufficient imposed load such that they can be presented unladen. However, the layout and design of some vehicles and trailers makes the use of the load simulator impractical or unsafe, or in some instances the axle simply cannot be sufficiently loaded using the simulator. So for the time being we will require these vehicles to be presented with a load. We may refuse to conduct a test if we are unable to carry out a satisfactory brake test. **Only in exceptional circumstances will we check the performance of the brakes when the vehicle is unladen.**

Common examples of vehicles and trailers with features that either prevent the use of the load simulator or cannot be sufficiently loaded using the load simulator are:

- Large heavy tailgates or rear doors, e.g. tippers.
- Long rear loading ramps e.g. livestock carrying vehicles when their unladen weight is less than 65% of their Design Gross Vehicle Weight (see below).
- Large tail lifts.
- Long rear overhangs.
- Vehicles sealed by Customs and Excise.
- Bogie weights exceeding 10,000 kg.
- Drawbar trailers.

On some vehicles, eg 2 axle tippers, the tailgate can be removed before the vehicle is presented for test. On other vehicles and trailers access for the load simulator means that the simulator cannot be used effectively. Where this happens we will require that the vehicle or trailer is presented laden. Enough load must be provided so that the weight of the vehicle or trailer exceeds 65% of the Design Gross Vehicle Weight (or the Maximum GB weight if this is less than 65% of the Design Gross Vehicle Weight). There are a number of ways that this can be achieved:

- Arranging to load the vehicle or trailer yourself.
- In the case of a 3 axle tractor unit, using our ballasted trailers (the local test station may have one for hire) or hiring such a trailer.
- Arranging for your vehicle or trailer to be presented to a designated premises where pull-down or loading facilities are available.
- Use a combination of a load directly above an axle that the load simulator cannot be applied and request the use of the load simulator on the other axle(s). Dangerous and hazardous goods vehicles and trailers must be presented in accordance with the guidelines stated in the "Guide to the inspection of dangerous/hazardous goods vehicles", available from the local test station. Further details of the types of vehicles and trailers that require a load can be found on the back of a HGV Test appointment letter.

Once again, only in the most exceptional circumstances will we check the performance of the brakes when the vehicle/trailer is unladen.

Notes

A load simulator is a mechanical device that is anchored to the floor of the test hall and applies a load above the rear axles of vehicles and all axles on a trailer during the brake test. The load simulator can apply a maximum load of 5000 kg. As VOSA requires the load to exceed 65% of the Design Gross Vehicle Weight for the purpose of the brake test the load simulator is only suitable for use on axle weight up to approximately 10,000 kg. In the majority of cases access for the load simulator is through the rear of the vehicle or trailer. The maximum reach of load simulator is approximate 2 metres. Should the distance between the rearmost point of the load platform and the axle exceed this on a vehicle or trailer then the load simulator may not be able to be applied or may not apply sufficient load for the purpose of the test.

A test may be refused if a test location cannot carry out a satisfactory brake test. The following vehicles/trailers must be presented in the laden condition:

- **Any multi-axle vehicle or trailer (excluding 3 axle semi-trailers)** with a bogie weight exceeding 10,000 kg.
- **Three axle tractor units** that are fitted with air suspension on any of the rear axles. To provide sufficient load these must be coupled to a loaded semi-trailer, so that the drive axle is loaded at or very close to the plated weight shown in column 2 of the plate and plating certificate. Tractor units that have been converted from 2 to 3 axles must also be presented laden if full braking force on the additional axle is related to the load on the drive axle.
- **Vehicles or trailers where our load simulators cannot be positioned above the axles** (not being any of the above) because of the construction of the vehicle, for example Tankers, Livestock Carriers*, vehicles or trailers equipped with large tail lifts, heavy tailgates or long rear overhangs. *Livestock is not acceptable as a load for test purposes. For the purpose of the brake test the load must exceed 65% of the Gross Vehicle Weight **or** the Maximum GB Weight, if this is lower.

Q11. If HGVs at a HGV Testing Station are brake performance tested laden is there a procedure to test the vehicle brakes with an unloaded simulation in order to test the brakes throughout the full range of the vehicle weight?

A11. VOSA has no facility to offload laden vehicles and therefore the answer to this is no. Vehicles that meet specific criteria for presentation laden are tested as laden and if the required standards are met, the vehicle is deemed to have met the minimum standards.

If you are unhappy with the decisions made in relation to your request from VOSA, you may ask for an internal review. You should contact ***** if you wish to complain.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours faithfully

VOSA Information Access