



Problem solvers

Are you facing a community transport problem? Perhaps you're assessing the implications of recent legislation or considering the specifications of a new vehicle. Whatever your community transport poser, *CTA Journal* can help.

Our problem solver Amanda Eastwood (pictured) is a member of the CTA's advice and information team. Every day the team members field enquiries from across the UK's community transport sector and have

a wealth of knowledge and experience to draw upon.

If you have a problem that you'd like solved on this page, please write to Problem Solvers at *CTA Journal*, Unit 4, 25a Vyner Street, London E2 9DG.

"We have been running minibuses for several years without any permits, but, having become a member of the CTA, we are now completing the application form for a section 19 small bus permit. It includes a question about our safety inspections. What are these?"

Safety inspections are a requirement when operating Public Service Vehicles (PSVs) and should be considered an essential part of the maintenance programme for your vehicles. They can give an early indication of wear or damage which may result in unscheduled downtime and costly repairs.

Every organisation that obtains permits from the CTA (which is authorised to issue section 19 and, in Northern Ireland, section 10b permits to its members) has to sign a declaration that it will undertake regular safety inspections because all transport operators have a "duty of care" to avoid causing dangers on the road under the Road Traffic Act 1988. This means that anyone who "causes or permits" such an offence could be liable to prosecution.

The CTA always promotes best practice and supports the guidelines set by the Vehicle & Operator Services Agency (VOSA) for commercially operated PSVs.

VOSA's recently updated *Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness*, which now contains a pull-out chart showing a drivers'

walkaround check, shows these guidelines. A well-planned maintenance regime should include the following components – all of which are of equal importance: daily checks, a system of reporting and recording faults, the usual manufacturers' service requirements and annual MOT testing.

A safety inspection must not be confused with the manufacturers' servicing recommendations and must include all the items tested during the annual MOT test. When working out the frequency of safety inspections you should take into consideration the annual mileage covered as well as time when the vehicle is not being used. Most operators find that a time-based programme will suit their scheduling. VOSA recommends that the interval between safety inspections on a PSV should be no more than 10 weeks.

Safety inspections can be carried out "in-house", providing you have appropriate facilities. A full list of ideal facilities is given in the *Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness*. Most operators will contract out their maintenance but care should be given to the choice of garage and, ideally, operators should draw up a contract between themselves and their contractor.

The *Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness* states that safety inspections must be undertaken by a mechanically competent person. Inspectors should be trained in the techniques of vehicle examination, diagnosis and reporting, and have knowledge of the inspection manuals produced by VOSA.

Each safety inspection must be recorded on a report and show at least the following:

- **Name of operator**
- **Date of inspection**
- **Vehicle identity**
- **Odometer reading**
- **List of things inspected and their condition**
- **Any defects found**
- **Any remedial, rectification or repair work carried out and by whom**
- **A statement that, after the inspection, any defects have been repaired satisfactorily**

During the safety inspection the inspector should not be expected to undertake any repairs or servicing work – this should only be carried out after the inspection has been completed.

After the inspection the inspector should sign the form to state that, in their opinion, the vehicle they have inspected will be roadworthy until the next timed inspection.

The reports must be kept for at least 15 months as part of the vehicle's history, along with MOT certificates, lift inspections (if applicable) and other records you are required by law to keep. ■

The CTA advice and information service

The CTA's advice and information service covers the UK. It is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. There's also more information and advice on the CTA's website, www.ctauk.org. To contact an expert adviser, telephone 0845 130 6195, or email advice@ctauk.org. In Northern Ireland, telephone 028 9040 3535 or email adviceNI@ctauk.org. NB: Since 1 January 2007, CTA Ireland manages its own service for the Republic of Ireland.

Further information

The revised 2007 version of the *Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness* is available from the VOSA website: www.vosa.gov.uk/vosacorp/repository/Guide%20to%20Maintaining%20Roadworthiness.pdf