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Welcome to our latest Newsletter. Since our last publication there have been quite a few changes to Drivers' Hours Legislation as well as a few transport industry developments; so please make sure you read this publication carefully.

Please also make sure you are a regular visitor to our website where you will find a lot of useful information and downloads from the latest legislation to the location of the best Roadside Cafés

Digital Downloads

Would all drivers remember to download their digital tachograph cards after every working period. This is very important because as an agency driver your assignment may be cancelled at short notice and you may not have another opportunity. Also get a printout for your own records and hand them in with your analogue charts.

INSIDE ...

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Digitach driver cards malfunction in wallets

Motor Transport reports that digital tachograph cards could be failing if drivers store them in their wallets. The DVLA has acknowledged that if cards are stored in wallets, next to credit cards, then the magnetic strip on the credit card can affect the functionality of the digitach card. The DVLA confirms that this is a common problem. "I would say on average I speak to about three drivers a day that have malfunctioning cards", says a DVLA employee. "We always ask where they keep their cards and more often than not it is in their wallets." It is worth noting that the DVLA will replace malfunctioning cards immediately and free of charge. It is unclear whether VOSA will be issuing warnings and guidance on this matter but our advice would be to store your card away from your bank cards and other cards bearing a magnetic strip.



Drivers' Hours Legislation

Some drivers registering with us are still unaware of the updated tachograph regulations which changed in January and February this year. Please refer to our Drivers' Handbook for the latest regulations, but in summary the main changes are:

- Drivers must keep tachograph charts for the current day and the previous 28 calendar days
- Charts should be returned to the Operator within 42 days

Amazingly, there is still a minority of drivers signing on with us who are unaware of the rules regarding daily breaks. This rule changed in April 2007, so everyone should be aware of it by now. Drivers are no longer able to split their 45 minute break into 3 periods of 15 minutes. Now, breaks can only be split into a first period of 15 minutes and a second period of 30 minutes.

CIRCLE CHECKS AND DEFECT REPORTING

Sometimes when you are up against deadlines, circle checks and defect reporting is put to one side or forgotten about completely. It is in your interest to carry out thorough checks and fill out a defect note prior to leaving for your days work. A badly maintained vehicle is more likely to be pulled over by the police or VOSA, and you as the driver could be held liable if no defect sheet is handed to the client before leaving the yard. It is useful to carry a torch for early morning vehicle checks. Your licence and your livelihood are at stake so you should take this very seriously indeed.

Never smoke in a vehicle and please also ensure that you leave the vehicle in a clean and tidy condition, regardless of how you found it.

Speed Kills So Kill Your Speed

Speeding is still one of the major causes of road deaths in Europe, and the authorities are becoming stricter over this serious breach of the law. Please always keep your speed below the limit and stay safe. You may also save yourself a hefty fine and points on your licence

SatNavs ~ A blessing or a curse?

Well, the answer to that question depends on how you use the new technology. Used in combination with common sense and, dare we say it - a map, SatNavs can be a real timesaver. However, if you blindly follow the SatNav's instructions without keeping your eyes & ears open and your brain engaged then you are heading for a fall.

Sure you can download bridge heights and width restrictions from the internet, but you still have to use common sense. Do not follow a SatNav's directions unless you have referred to a map first and have some idea of where you are headed. Also make sure you do not ignore road signs telling you where to go and warning you of potential "hazards" like one-way systems, low bridges and narrow lanes.

Bridge strikes are becoming a common occurrence as Romsey residents will testify; they cost time and money and cause untold disruption to local residents and businesses. And all too often the excuse is "The SatNav directed me under the bridge". By law, height markers must be displayed in all cabs so drivers should be aware of the height of their vehicle before they set off. Low bridges are always signposted well ahead, giving drivers plenty of opportunity to find an alternative route. So, there are no excuses. Blaming SatNavs for what can only be described as driver error will not wash with the police and transport managers. The problem has become so great that some councils have put up signs warning "satnavvers" to be sceptical of the advice given by their GPS systems, and to obey good old-fashioned road signs instead.

The moral of the story? Don't ditch your trusty old A-Z quite yet, and keep your eyes open and brain engaged.



RHIDES

Container drivers who have used the Felixstowe terminals over the last couple of years will already be aware that the port authorities have introduced an identity card system called 'RHIDES'. The port of Felixstowe has issued notification that this system will soon be introduced at Thamesport. The card used at Felixstowe will be valid at Thamesport, so those of you who are already in possession of a RHIDES card, or have a preliminary letter enclosing your pin number, need take no action.

If you are a container driver and you do not have a RHIDES card or a letter with a PIN number then please contact us so that we can make an application for a card on your behalf.

HARD HATS

We have recently learned that all drivers entering the Thamesport container terminal must be wearing a safety helmet. Drivers not in possession of a hard hat will not be allowed into the terminal.

Southdown Driving supplies Hi-Vis vests and rigger gloves free of charge to all drivers, but safety shoes and safety helmets are your own responsibility. If you as a container driver are not in possession of a hard hat then please get one. If you are unable to obtain one then Southdown can order one for you at a cost of £3.20 each which will be automatically deducted from your wages. Please contact the office if you would like us to order one for you.



Timesheet Online

Our website now has a facility for drivers to submit their hours to us online. Go to the Drivers Download page and submit your hours by completing the online timesheet. So now there really is no excuse not to get your hours in by midday on Monday because you have many options:

- ⊕ Use a traditional timesheet and get the client to sign it at the end of your working week. If you use this method, please make sure you use a different timesheet for each company at which you worked. Timesheets can be obtained from the office or printed from a pdf file on the website.
- ⊕ Use the online facility on the website. Please always follow this up by sending a signed timesheet if you have one.
- ⊕ Call your hours in by telephone. However, we prefer either of the above methods

See our upgraded website to submit your hours and download the Driver's Handbook