

National Measurement Office reports back to Tyre Industry

Surely there can be nobody in the tyre industry who is unaware that the National Measurement Office is the body that has been tasked with the enforcement of the EU regulations regarding tyre labelling.

One of the first jobs that the NMO set itself was to gauge the level of compliance among tyre retailers and also to ascertain the level of knowledge of the retailers' responsibilities under the legislation. The results have been recently published in a report entitled 'Tyre Retailer Awareness and Compliance'.

Retailers were contacted by phone and there were two types of call; the first (to assess compliance) was a 'mystery shopper' call, asking for a specific size of tyre. Under the legislation, the retailer should, when he gives details of the brand, make the consumer aware of the criteria covered by the label and direct him to the Internet or other promotional material where he can view the information.

Of the 40 retailers contacted (the companies were chosen to represent all sizes of retailers, from national chains to one-depot businesses) only four exhibited a high level of compliance, with smaller companies generally performing

worse than the larger ones. This, says the NMO, may be partly because the larger companies have greater resources. However, it also makes the point that it is not all the fault of the retailer, as there are low levels of knowledge and interest among consumers. There is, says the NMO, "a clear need for a change of behaviour on both sides of the transaction in order to enable the customer to make an informed choice."

In the second phone call (to establish awareness levels), the NMO identified itself to the retailer and asked a number of questions, covering the retailer's responsibilities. The results here were much more encouraging, with 18 of the 40 companies contacted showing a high level of knowledge. The NMO concludes that "There is a high level of compliance when it comes to knowledge of the label, but not when it comes to the overall purpose of the label and passing the information to the consumer."

The NTDA's attitude to tyre labelling is that it has always been a major opportunity for members, provided that the retailer takes the time to engage with the customer. As Stefan Hay put it: "Those that provide customers with advice and guide them to the correct purchasing decision will differentiate themselves from those who don't."

Wolverhampton takes action on Part Worns

In January we reported how an NTDA-funded investigation into part worn tyres by Trading Standards in Wolverhampton turned up some disturbing results – all the tyres inspected were illegal for not being correctly marked and one third were regarded as unsafe.

In response to the findings, Wolverhampton City Council has conducted an extensive local press and media campaign to highlight to motorists the dangers of driving on unsafe tyres. And there is the possibility of further action to follow, hinted Councillor John Reynolds, Wolverhampton City Council's Cabinet Member for City Services.

Cllr Reynolds accepted that, in the current economic climate, part worn sales are on the increase as motorists try to keep costs down, but he described unsafe part worns as "a serious danger to all road users." He continued: "We will be working with part worn tyre sellers in our area to ensure they are aware of the legislation to prevent the sale of unsafe tyres, but for the more serious failures, enforcement action will be considered."

NTDA Director Stefan Hay welcomed the Council's stance, saying: "Tyres are a safety critical component for all vehicles and selling part worn tyres which are dangerous not only puts the driver at risk but also other road users and we are pleased that some of the eighteen sellers identified in this investigation are now facing enforcement action from Wolverhampton City Council's TSO. Unfortunately the NTDA-funded projects being carried out by Trading Standards officers throughout the country confirm that too many of these tyres are totally unfit for use and should not be sold to unsuspecting motorists."



NTDA launches LinkedIn group

Stefan Hay is a firm believer in the usefulness and power of social media when it comes to communications, so it is hardly surprising that one of his first actions in his new role as NTDA Director was to establish a members' group on the social networking website LinkedIn.

LinkedIn has 250 million members worldwide and is principally used for professional networking – it is ideal for those who do not have the spare time to attend networking events. The new group will connect NTDA members and other professionals from across the tyre industry, informing them of latest happenings at the Association as well as wider tyre industry news. LinkedIn is not just a passive news medium, as feedback is welcomed and members are encouraged to comment and join group discussions on matters that affect their industry and their businesses.

Stefan Hay explains: "We have already used the group to advise members on such matters as REACT, news from the NMO, stolen tyres, suspect tyre repairs from Eastern Europe, issues with Traffic Scotland, amongst others." Stefan initially promoted the group on LinkedIn (naturally!) and already more than 100 tyre industry professionals have signed up, with more enquiries coming in on a daily basis, so it appears that the new networking forum is indeed up and running.



NI Region NTDA AGM

Dasos Michaelides General Manager of Donnolly Group has been elected as the new Chairman of the NTDA's Northern Ireland Region. He received his badge of office from NTDA Director Stefan Hay who attended the Region's AGM. In accepting the Chairman's position, Dasos paid tribute to Roy Nutt of W H Nutt & Son saying "Roy has been an outstanding Chairman for the Region, his drive and enthusiasm are infectious and I am very proud to be following in his footsteps".

Stefan Hay said: "The Northern Ireland Region is an extremely energetic and proactive region and I was delighted to be invited to the AGM, which in addition to being very well attended, was a well organised and extremely informative event. The region is tackling issues such as the growing problems associated with part worn tyres and illegal dumping of tyres head on and in partnership with the relevant authorities and their tyre industry colleagues in the Irish Republic and must be applauded for their effort to promote NTDA best practices."

Licence To Fit – Driving Up Standards



Sometimes being a roadside fitter can be a thankless task – and a dangerous one too – out in all weathers, any time of the day or night and often working uncomfortably close to speeding traffic. Working in these conditions, fitters deserve the best in training. It was for precisely these reasons that a group was formed, composed of manufacturers, retailers and training providers to ensure that roadside fitters received the first class training to enable them to carry out their duties competently and safely. The group was called REACT (Roadside Emergency Action Concerning Tyres) and it came up with the Licence to Fit scheme, which certifies that the fitter has undergone thorough training in roadside working and safety procedures. This training is carried out by the equities, new tyre manufacturers and independent training providers with regular updates to keep them abreast of changes in legislation – for example Hard Shoulder Running - and to ensure that their skills are kept up to date.

Phil Thirsk is the Chair of the REACT steering committee and he says of the LtF scheme: "Replacing tyres at the roadside is a unique service that our industry provides and it comes with its own unique hazards. Employers are investing in roadside training to provide their breakdown service technicians with the best opportunities while working at the roadside, or even while working in customers' premises. "Fleet operators today require technicians working on their vehicles to have an understanding of health and safety and to be equipped not only with products and services but also with the right abilities."

LtF has proved to be a great success and there are now over 100 companies participating in the scheme, which has been approved by the Highways Agency as improving working safety. Said NTDA Director Stefan Hay: "LtF has been embraced by companies of all sizes, from single depot businesses to national chains and we are well on the way to reaching, if not exceeding, our Q1 2014 target of 1,500 licensed roadside fitters."

As well as improving safety standards and hopefully reducing the number of accidents while working roadside, LtF has another advantage, as it shows the customer that he is dealing with a professional organisation that takes safety seriously and is prepared to invest in its technicians by training them to the highest possible standards in order to work safely and efficiently. LtF-trained technicians are issued with a REACT photo ID card to prove that they have undergone the course. These are valid for five years, after which refresher training is required before a replacement card is issued. Says Phil Thirsk: "The REACT ID card proves best practice for all concerned and indicates that the tyre industry is, along with the NTDA, taking control of training in our industry." **Is your company participating in the scheme? Are you committed to health and safety best practice and CPD? REACT now and contact the NTDA on 08449 670707 for further information.**