

TESTING TIMES

Roadworthiness Section, Road Safety, VicRoads

September 1996 ♦ Issue 3

WELCOME

Hello again and welcome to the **third edition** of Testing Times.

First off - a reminder

Please remember to pass this copy to your other staff and testing mechanics so they get the information too.

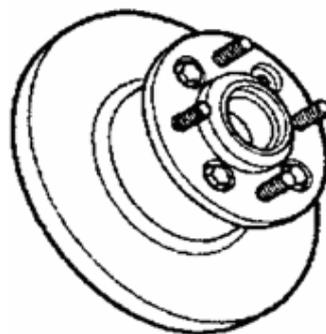
As of the end of July the series of LVT seminars conducted around the State during the last two years came to an end. A total of forty evenings were attended by well over 3000 licensed vehicle testers and their staff. A vote of thanks goes to Peter Hay who came out of retirement to assist in conducting these evenings as well as all the "behind the scenes" work of organising the invitations and venues etc. Peter has now returned to the easy life so if you missed out on attending one of these evening you may have to wait another few years before we can convince him that he needs a change again and the series is repeated. However, a number of testers were unable to attend the seminar in their area and if enough people who missed out request it, we may be able to run a couple of special nights, so let us know by mail/fax.

The TAFE colleges of Victoria reached a milestone this year with the accreditation of the 500th licensed vehicle tester applicant. As you would be aware the TAFE college now conducts the courses on behalf of VicRoads for the mandatory accreditation required before an applicant can become a Licensed Vehicle Tester.

The licensed taxi testers are now in full swing, all forty of them, and they have now inspected virtually the entire taxi fleet on behalf of the Taxi Directorate. We have held our first joint meeting with the testers and members of the Taxi Directorate to air some issues and answer queries. The new Minister, Mr Geoff Craige even dropped in for a few minutes to chat to some of the testers. Please note that there are still some areas where taxi testers are few and far between and a business opportunity exists for any LVT who wants to put in that little bit extra.

POSTER AND CATALOGUE

Thanks to a very generous offer from Disc Brakes Australia, enclosed with this newsletter is a poster for your office/workshop and the latest catalogue of DBA's production showing the manufacturer's dimensions for different applications.



If you put the poster up in a prominent position it will be handy should any customer complain when you reject their vehicle for excessively worn disc rotors.

You do measure rotor thickness and check against the spec's don't you?

NEW LOOK LICENCE

A new license document has been introduced to simplify the licence renewal process.



When the renewal arrives you should ***read the conditions of licence.***

If you as the licence holder agree to the renewal conditions then:

- * sign the licence (the top part);
- * separate it from the rest of the form;
- * sign the declaration on the bottom of the form
- * send the bottom part back to VicRoads - don't forget to include the licence fee.
- * display the licence (the top part you retained) on your premises.

RUMOUR CORNER

You may have seen or heard in the media, articles referring to the reduction in used car warranty and some suggestions of inspecting older vehicles every few years. There are even suggestions that regular EPA inspections will occur.

At this stage that's all they are - media articles. Where there is smoke there is usually fire but for some of these to happen legislation will need to be changed. Should any decisions be made to change the current situation there will be plenty of warning. In the mean time it's business as usual.

IT'S THE LAW



Number plates and covers

You do not have to check number plates as part of a roadworthy test but this information

might be of assistance to your customers.

Regulation 821 (2) of the Road Safety (Vehicles) Regulations 1988 and the Standards for Registration

require that the part of a number plate cover that covers the number plate:

- i. Must not obscure the number plate in any way,
- ii. Must be clear, untinted and uncoloured,
- iii. Must have surfaces which are flat both on the side which faces the number plate and on the side which faces away from the vehicle,
- iv. Must have non-reflective characteristics and,
- v. Must have no unusual refractive characteristics.

These requirements effectively prohibit number plate covers which have curved, domed, tinted or reflective surfaces from being fitted to a vehicle.

Number plate covers which have lines or other markings on the surface which go over the number plate are also effectively prohibited. This may seem tough but who can decide how thick the lines can be before they start to obscure the characters?

Regulation 222(2)(b) of the Road Safety (Vehicles) Regulations 1988 also requires that a number plate fitted to a vehicle must be clearly distinguishable and not be wholly or partially obscured.

ROADWORTHY ISSUES

Headlamp Covers

The Standards for Registration and the Australian Design Rules specify colour and performance requirements for lamps on a vehicle and require that headlamps show only white light. Regulation 818(1) of the Road Safety (Vehicles) Regulation 1988 also requires that all lamps must be clean and unobscured.

This makes it quite clear that any headlamp covers must be untinted, uncoloured and clean. However, unlike number plate covers, they can have thin lines as this will not reduce the lamp's effectiveness.

Parts availability

We have received comments about parts being unavailable especially on older vehicles. This is an important issue if the components are critical such as seat belts or pollution control fittings. We are currently investigating this problem but so far it seems not so much that the parts cannot be found but that they are costly. If it is only(!) cost, then I am sorry, no excuse. But if certain parts really cannot be found then that is another matter. So, if you can help by sending a letter or fax describing what you can't buy for specific vehicles it will help us to make the right decisions.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

Rear Main Oil Leaks

Rumour has it that one of the reasons you have trouble fixing rear main oil seal leaks on XF and later Falcons is due to distortion of the crankshaft. Surprising as it may seem, the distortion is apparently being caused by incorrect torquing (heavy handed application of the rattle gun?) when refitting the flywheel during clutch overhauls.

Brake Vibrations

Did you know that over tightened wheel nuts can cause brake discs and drums to distort? This distortion results in vibrations under braking which disappears when the wheel nuts are backed off and retensioned correctly. (heavy handed application of the rattle gun, again?)

Damaged Wheel Studs

We have also been getting complaints from people who couldn't get their wheel nuts undone or the stud has snapped the first time they tried to change a wheel. We have certainly experienced this with some of the cars we have looked at. (Obviously the problem is again the dreaded rattle gun)

Rattle Guns

Most small rattle guns are capable of providing up to 200ft/lb of torque when used at full blast with 110-120psi air pressure. Most car size wheel studs only need 45-65 ft/lb to be fully tightened. (Hmmm!! Could be a problem here). I haven't seen a gun yet without an adjuster to limit the torque output. How about we check the settings so we can use this helpful tool to its best advantage without causing unnecessary damage.

Identifying Vehicles

One of the critical steps in conducting a roadworthy test is to identify the vehicle being tested. Not only do you need to know which is the vehicle you saw last week but Vic Roads is relying on the numbers you write down when vehicles are registered or transferred. It's pretty important when **A**naries are being cleared too. It is vital that you get the (real!) chassis number or VIN off the vehicle structure and **not** off the rivetted on aluminium plate. You are also expected to get the engine number off the block unless it is missing, defaced or impossible to find under power steering pumps or other equipment.

This also means that you might have to get your hands dirty while you clean the dirt and grease off so the numbers can be read. The real issue here is that if the roadworthy says **A**annot find (the number) and our registration staff find it without any difficulty you are not doing your job. If the vehicle is going to need a VP number then that is another issue but if the vehicle has got the numbers we need, we do expect you to make a reasonable effort to find and record them.

ENGINEER'S REPORTS

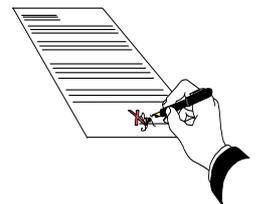
What are engineer's reports?

These are documents produced by professional Mechanical Engineers which describe the design elements of a vehicle. They are used by VicRoads to determine if a vehicle is acceptable for registration or to see if modifications have been carried out satisfactorily.



What effect do they have on roadworthy checks ?

- * If the vehicle has been imported and is not yet registered, VicRoads may require an engineer's report before it is registered. This will certainly be the case if a steering conversion has been performed. In these cases the roadworthy inspection should be the last thing that is done to make sure that any work does not affect the roadworthiness of the vehicle.
- * If the vehicle is registered but has had an engine swap, brake modification or similar, then the tester does not have to worry about the engineer's report unless something looks wrong, for example cracked welds, steering binding or a misaligned engine.
- * If the vehicle has been repaired after an accident (perhaps a **A**ut and shut (an engineer's report is not normally required and should not be asked for. Where major repairs have been done and you are unhappy about their quality you can ask for a statement from the owner or manager of a recognised panel shop. A copy of a suitable accident damage repair report is attached. You could give your customer a copy of this and say you will not issue a RWC until it is completed. You do have the right to protect yourself.



MYTHS 'N' BIG 'UNS

Why can I have bigger wheels?

Well you can sir, but they must meet the modification guidelines (VSI No 8).

But it will handle better with big wheels!!

Well it might, but it might be worse.

Rubbish, with all that extra rubber it must stop and steer better!

Actually if the wheels are taller than standard, the brakes will have to work harder to stop the vehicle.

Why is that?

Its all about leverage. The brakes are trying to stop the wheel from turning. The amount of energy they can dissipate is related to how big the brakes are, how hard they are applied and how well they get rid of the heat. How hard they have to work depends on the how much force in the form of the road pushing the wheel around they have to resist.

What difference does a taller wheel make?

A taller wheel gives the road more leverage to fight against the brakes.

So all I have to do is press harder on the brakes?

That's OK for normal driving if the change is very small. However, in some cases you might not be able press the brake pedal hard enough to stop the vehicle fast enough in an emergency.

What about my 4WD, I need big wheels to get through the ruts?

If you put the taller wheels on then you have effectively done a brake modification. In that case you will need an engineer's report. The engineer will tell you what other changes need to be made so the brakes will work properly again.

At least the big wheels will make it handle better!!

Perhaps! But only if you consider.....and the story goes on and on.

COMMUNICATIONS

It is important that all information sent or faxed into the Roadworthy Section should have the 4Ys:



1. Your name
2. Your trading name
3. Your contact number (phone)
4. Your LVT number

and most importantly, who the fax or letter is for.

We receive applications for licences and details of mechanic's qualifications that cannot be processed because we don't have sufficient contact information.

If you want your matter seen to, remember the 4Ys.

SUPPLIES

Need a new book of certificates? Perhaps a register? Do you have all the latest VSI's and guidelines? Whatever your needs contact the VicRoads bookshop and now to get what you want (and pay for it) is easier than ever.

If you want to buy a new book of RWC's over the counter then all you need is:

- * the proforma from your old RWC book, correctly completed (signed by the Director/owner of the licence),
- * positive identification of yourself, or your representative (photograph on a drivers licence or passport would be ideal), and
- * cash, cheque or credit card.

The bookshop's address is:

**VicRoads Bookshop
Ground Floor
60 Denmark Street
Kew Vic 3101**

To ring them simply dial (03) 9854 2782 between 8.30 am and 4.30 pm Monday to Friday.

The Bookshop also supplies a courier service and your purchases will be delivered to you at no extra cost. Not only does this give you prompt delivery but ensures their security.

The current cost of LVT essentials are:-

LVT sign	\$100.00
LVT Register	\$ 15.00
Book of 100 certificates	\$100.00
Standards Information Book.....	\$ 25.00

