

TESTING TIMES

Roadworthiness Section, Road Safety, VicRoads

December 1997 ♦ Issue 5

WELCOME

This is Edition 5. It seems that you are all happy to receive Testing Times so thanks for your encouragement. We would however appreciate you providing ideas and articles that we could include. Perhaps a question or an interpretation that you believe others might appreciate. Whatever it is, just drop us a note or a phone call.



ROADWORTHY ISSUES

Oil Leaks

Question: When is a leak not a leak?

Answer: Usually when someone doesn't want to pay for fixing it.

Why do we worry about oil leaks? The three main reasons are pollution, safety and road damage.

Safety might seem a bit obvious. Oil makes the road surface slippery particularly in the wet, it damages rubber components in brake hoses, engine and transmission mounts and suspension bushes. It can cause a fire when heated by an exhaust system. It also gets thrown around by passing vehicles contaminating windscreens and spoiling wet weather vision.

Road damage. Oil and bitumen are both components of crude oil. When you drop oil onto

bitumen the oil breaks softens the bitumen causing the road surface to deteriorate and increasing the road maintenance cost.

Pollution. Spilt oil gets washed off the road surface and into our drains and waterways where the contamination damages the ecosystem.

What is an excessive oil leak?

The Roadworthy Guidelines say that the vehicle may not drop excessive quantities of oil to the roadway. One droplet that is wiped away before a road test and which shows no sign of reappearing when you return to the workshop, is not excessive. Oil that is forming multiple droplets underneath a vehicle can only fall to the roadway so it should be failed. If the vehicle drops oil on the ground during the test then obviously it fails.



Windscreens

We have had three windscreens referred to us in the last fortnight to be checked for excessive sandblasting. If these windscreens had been cleaned first it would have been realised that it's the time of year for tree sap to fall on vehicles. Yes I know, public servants have the time to waste but it is your time too.

Leaking Windscreens.

If the vehicle is a later model with a bonded in type of screen, then a water leak indicates that it has not been installed correctly. This type of windscreen is usually a structural part of the vehicle and being fitted properly is very important to safety. If a customer returns with a recently fitted screen leaking refer them to the installer or the previous owner for a warranty claim. It is unlikely that you would find this problem during a normal roadworthy inspection.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Identifying Vehicles

Following on from our article in Edition 4 it became obvious that we needed a better way of identifying vehicles which are presented for inspection without VINs or chassis numbers. With assistance from our registration people we have produced a **one use label** which should be used in preference to number stamps - no hassles with the owner! Some labels are included with this edition of Testing Times. You should keep the labels with your vehicle register so that they can be accounted for. The labels are no excuse for not looking for the VIN number and we have only supplied five to each premise. On our current figures this is enough for three years on average. If you need more they can be requested through the office. The label is self voiding, that is, it is designed for one use only. Once it has been stuck on a vehicle it cannot be removed in one piece. This is to prevent misuse.



How to use the labels

As shown below, each label has two rows of seven boxes to equal the letter and numbers on the RWC.

VICROADS						

Write the serial number of the RWC in each row (i.e. write the number down twice). Make sure you only enter one letter or digit in each square.

Stick the top part of the label with **AicRoads** on it onto the vehicle. Attach the other part to your vehicle register so it can be audited. **Don't** lose it.

When the vehicle is presented to VicRoads the number will be matched against the RWC.

Sticking the label on the vehicle.

The surface needs to be clean. The preferred position is the left hand front suspension tower. If this is not possible/practical then some other easily seen fixed part such as the radiator support panel or firewall is OK.

If the label is damaged VicRoads will assume it has been tampered with and will not accept it. We now know for sure that the vehicle presented is the one you issued with the RWC.

Accuracy of Vehicle ID by LVTs

To reduce the potential for fraud and speed up the paperwork it is essential that the RWC has the right identification. A survey was recently conducted where the identity of a vehicle (i.e VIN/Chassis No. and Engine No) when the vehicle was presented at a Registration Office was compared with the numbers recorded by the LVT on the RWC. Several thousand vehicles and certificates were examined. **The error rate was a staggering 26 percent!**

This raised the question, were all these the same ones you issued with RWCs? Thankfully the answer is probably yes but it made us question how well some of you do your job.

By far the most common error was the omission of an identifier prefix or suffix. Other common errors were mistaking **S** for **5**, **C** for **0**, **B** for **8**, **V** for **U** etc and vice versa. See VSI 14 for details on the structure of VINs. LVTs should familiarise themselves with the general format of VINs of the more common makes - e.g. a Ford Falcon VIN looks like this:

6FPAAAJGSWMY12345

where JGSWMY12345 is also used as the Engine Number.

Many VINs were in error for having too many or too few characters - this often occurred when letters or digits were repeated in succession - e.g. ...555... for ...55... etc. The latest version of the roadworthy certificate should help with this as there is now a box provided for each digit of the VIN. If you haven't filled in all the boxes on a vehicle built after 1988 or have numbers left over, check it again.

Describing defects on RWCs

When you are describing the faults you have found when filling out the test report, we need you to cover three issues:

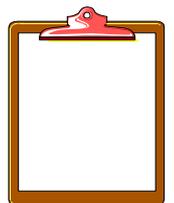
- 1 identify the faulty item,
- 2 describe the fault,
- 3 explain the action required

For example - *R/H tie rod end, excessive movement, rectify* - is a legitimate report as it covers all three points whereas - *R/H tie rod U/S* - doesn't help much.

The reason you need to describe things so thoroughly is to reduce time handling customer complaints. If we cannot explain why something was rejected we are going to send the complainant right back to you.

Customer complaints

While we are talking about customer complaints, as a general guide, once an independent tester has confirmed that roadworthy faults actually exist we



usually ask complainant to go back to the LVT who issued their roadworthy. If you are contacted by someone who has a legitimate problem we expect you to arrange a reinspection of the vehicle. When you have reinspected the vehicle, any items you disagree with can be discussed with your area Supervisor. This may result in the independent tester having to justify their decision. Under some circumstances a Supervisor may arrange to inspect the vehicle with you.

If the reinspection finds that there are faults on the vehicle you should decide if:

- (a) they have clearly occurred since your test, or
- (b) they couldn't be found during your test, or
- (c) you missed them.

(a) is not your problem unless it is later damage caused by (c).

(b) is usually not your problem and includes things like swapped wheels.

(c) is your problem and if you don't negotiate a satisfactory solution with the customer they have the right to sue you in court for **Failure of duty of care** (negligence). If they win they can also get costs awarded, which can be more expensive than the repairs. If in doubt get proper legal advice.

Remember that if a customer believes that a job hasn't been done properly then they have a legal and a moral right to question it.



A lot of the disputes we have been involved in would not have escalated so much if both parties had taken a realistic attitude at the start.

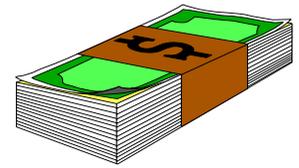
The other thing to realise is that even if VicRoads decides not to take action against your licence the consumer can still take action and we may have to support them in court.

In a recent case, an argument over a \$4000 repair to a \$12,000 motor car resulted in nearly \$30,000 of legal costs plus the requirement to buy the car back. Someone is going to have to pay those costs and it could be you. So next time someone complains think carefully before you decide what to do.

Liability Insurance

It seems that a number of testers do not have professional liability insurance. Legal advice suggests that you are not covered by your normal **faulty workmanship** insurance when conducting roadworthy testing. This is because you are providing professional opinions not conducting work.

As indicated above your costs could be many thousands of dollars so it is well worth checking your own situation.



Testing Procedure

One of the few complaints we have had with the new look roadworthy certificate is the lack of a **list of** things to check. The RWC requirements leave the responsibility for determining the *how* and *why* of testing up to each LVT. Many testers have not come to grips with this concept and as a result they are not conducting their testing in a consistent manner. The easiest way to make sure you don't miss things is to have a checklist to work through.



After a lot of consultation the boys at TAFE have solved this part of the problem by creating a checklist sheet which matches the training manual. A sample of their sheet is enclosed and while we can't endorse any particular product we can see how this will help in the workshop.



Engineer's Reports

Despite information provided in previous issues of Testing Times the Vehicle Safety Branch still receives many enquires and complaints from members of the public regarding requests by LVTs for **Engineer's Reports**. It is claimed that the LVT will not issue a certificate or even inspect some vehicles until an **Engineer's Report** is provided.

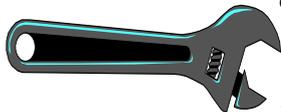
An Engineer's Report is a technical assessment report issued by an appropriately qualified engineer to certify that a modified or imported vehicle has been inspected, that all modifications have been carried out and completed in accordance with recognized standards and codes of practice and that the vehicle in its modified form continues to comply with the Standards for Registration.

A Roadworthiness Certificate is as set out in Vehicle Standards Information (VSI) 26. In other words it is a basic safety check that the vehicle is fit for use on the road.

A RWC is not a certificate of compliance with the Standards for Registration.

An **Engineer's Report** may be required by VicRoads or a Police Officer (not an LVT) as evidence of compliance with the Standards for Registration when a modified or imported vehicle is presented for registration or change of description.

An Engineer's Report or other evidence of compliance should only be requested by the LVT where the quality of the modification or repairs (particularly structural repairs) are judged to be below an acceptable standard. However in most of these situations if sub-standard workmanship or worn or damaged components is apparent (e.g.



cracked welds, binding steering, misaligned engine or drive line etc) then it is more appropriate to issue a rejection

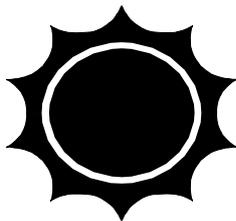
report than ask for an Engineer's Report. If the owner disputes this rejection then they can try and get an Engineer's Report to prove you wrong.

Remember an Engineer's Report won't fix the problem and can put the owner to a lot of cost.

An Engineers Report is appropriate where the problem can only be fixed by redesigning and/or manufacturing special replacement parts.

Windscreen Tinting

There have been stories about a new window tint film is being marketed for use on the windscreens of motor vehicles. It is claimed this film is clear and reduces infra red and ultra violet light transmission without affecting visible light transmittance.



However any film, tinted or otherwise, applied to the primary vision area of a windscreen will cause the windscreen not to comply with the Standards for Registration and in most cases will also cause the light transmittance to fall below the minimum level of 75%. Therefore if a vehicle presented for a roadworthiness inspection has any film applied to the windscreen it should be rejected unless the film is only in that part of the windscreen above the primary vision area as defined in VSI 2.

OFFICE CONTACT

The correct address for the office is:

**Roadworthiness Section
VicRoads
4th floor
60 Denmark Street
KEW VIC 3101**

Toll free phone number **1800 816 727**
Fax number **(03) 98542668**

SUPPLIES

The VicRoads bookshop is now using the same roadworthy database that the supervisors use. When they supply RWC books they do a security check to see if the person ordering the books is authorised to purchase them.

Books can only be ordered by:

- (a) the licence holder, or
- (b) a director of the company which holds a licence, or
- (c) a person who has been delegated in writing by one of the above people.

As this is a legal issue we have to make sure we only supply to approved people, so if you need a delegation please contact us for a full explanation.



If you need a new book of certificates, a register or the latest VSI's and guidelines contact the VicRoads bookshop.

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 or representative 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**

Phone **(03) 9854 2782**
Fax **(03) 9854 2468**

and it is open 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.