

Operators must knuckle down and get on with Driver CPC training if a massive backlog in testing is to be avoided in 2014, a seminar at the House of Commons was told. **Steve Hobson** reports

Driver CPC won't go away...



The controversial Driver CPC is here to stay and will be rigorously enforced when the deadline comes around in 2014, the transport industry has been warned.

Speaking at a seminar at the House of Commons, the chair of the Commons transport select committee Louise Ellman MP and North Western Transport Commissioner Beverley Bell both emphasised that rumours that

the UK government will seek a derogation from the European Union directive were false.

"Driver CPC is not going to go away," insisted Ellman. "With 82% of UK freight going by road, this is a major sector of our economy, and legislation on training will not be ignored."

She added: "A lot of people hope that the regulations will go away – that's not going to happen. The UK

government does not want to be taken to court for failing to carry out its responsibilities."

Mick Jackson, CEO at sector skills council Skills for Logistics (SfL), warned that Ireland, Portugal and Greece had already had action taken against them by the European Union for failing to implement the Driver CPC directive.

"The moral is – ignore Driver CPC at your peril!" he said.

Bell added: "The regulations are not going to go away. My message to operators who appear at public inquiries is: Don't wait until next year to do driver training – get it under your belt this year."

Way off target

David Higginbottom, former business development director at training provider RTITB and now a consult-

ant, warned that the current rate of take up of Driver CPC was "way off" the target the industry would have to meet if the September 2014 deadline was to be met.

By then, roughly 400,000 CV and 125,000 PCV drivers must have completed five seven-hour training courses rubber-stamped by approvals body JAAPT to continue driving.

"If we don't deal with it, there is a major problem stacking up," he said. "Driver Standards Agency statistics show that the number of people coming into the industry qualified and ready to drive is alarmingly down since the introduction of Driver CPC [in 2009]."

Jackson calculated that drivers should be undertaking 3.7 million training hours a year to hit the deadline.

"Around five million hours have been delivered so far, so we are heading for a 27.5% shortfall by 2014," he said.

An investment

Driver CPC training should be seen as an investment, not a cost, according to Gist HR director Mike Bousfield. "People are the most important differentiator for our business," he said.

"So they need to be as skilled as possible."

He said Gist had seen a 6% cut in



fuel consumption, a 20% reduction in employer liability claims, a 22% increase in productivity and a 33% reduction in employee accidents as a result of its Driver CPC training programme.

"We spend £50m a year on fuel, so that £3m saving drops straight to the bottom line," Bousfield said. "We train for competence, not compliance."

"We test drivers at the end of each course and measure their performance over time and have seen real, sustained

"We test drivers at the end of each course and measure their performance over time and have seen real, sustained and substantial benefits to the organisation"

Mike Bousfield

and substantial benefits to the organisation."

While he understood the temptation among some operators to take the minimalist approach to Driver CPC, Bousfield added: "The big cost is taking people off the road so it beats me why organisations want to put people through bulk courses at £30, £40 or £50 a head."

Quality training

There was a lot of talk of mass training taking place in old aircraft hangars for £30 a head, said Nigel Kirkwood, technical director of Tachograph Analysis Consultants. "You can have competitively priced, quality training by partnering, like TAC and Gist have done," he said. "But maybe we need better regulation of trainers to raise the quality of the training delivered."

Despite being in the regulation business, Bell said she wasn't going to call for trainers to be regulated, but added: "You get what you pay for."

She regularly reminded operators

"Driver Standards Agency statistics show that the number of people coming into the industry qualified and ready to drive is alarmingly down since the introduction of Driver CPC [in 2009]"

David Higginbottom

who appeared before her at public inquiries (PIs) that they had a duty to train their drivers, especially on drivers' hours rules.

In the Q&A session of the seminar Patrick Henry, driver development manager at Kuehne + Nagel, said: "I want quality training, we need to look at approving courses by post."

There has been concern that because JAAPT does not have the resources to carry out pre-approval audits of almost 1,000 training centres it has approved to deliver Driver CPC training, some companies are getting away with delivering sub-standard training.

Instead, JAAPT is approving centres and courses based on written evidence, aiming to inspect every centre at some point in its five-year approval period.

Rumours rebuked

Bell acknowledged she had heard that the quality of training was an issue and urged trade associations to take up the issue with the DfT.

However, Jackson – who is also a director of JAAPT – rebuked those who repeated rumours of sub-standard training and insisted JAAPT had an effective procedure to investigate written complaints about training providers.

"I get frustrated at all the anecdotes," he said. "If it is going on there are set procedures for JAAPT to get involved, but we can't do it on anecdotal evidence."

Centres audited

He said that a third of approved centres had now been audited and that the DfT and DSA were looking at pre-approval audits.

New CV drivers who have acquired their first HGV licence since September 2009 must also have completed the Driver CPC, including the Module 4 practical test, in order to drive professionally. To date, just 21,603 DQCs have been issued to HGV and PCV drivers completing the initial qualification. Bell said VOSA was checking these drivers are in possession of the driver qualification card.

"In some PIs I have had cases where the operator knows drivers don't have the card," she said. ■



92.6%

MOT
first time
pass rate.

VOSA MOT first time pass rate 76.8%

NATIONAL SKILLS ACADEMY

A National Skills Academy for Logistics (NSAL) has just received final approval, together with £3.2m in matched funding from government.

One key aim is to create a quality assured network of training providers delivering Driver CPC and other courses developed with employers. "We are trying to provide a one-stop-shop for employers," says Greg Cejer, operations director at NSAL. "NSAL is not a deliverer of training, but will help smaller employers in particular who don't know where to go."

Cejer says that 78% of employers have fewer than 10 employees, and for some companies the Driver CPC would be the first time they have done any skills development with their drivers. He adds that he has also heard that Driver CPC training is taking place in pubs, where the afternoon is spent watching football on TV, and one job of the NSAL would be to go to smaller companies and explain the business benefits of quality training.

52mins

average roadside attendance time.

AA average truck breakdown roadside attendance time 55min 48s