Guide to data collection

There has understandably been a mixed reaction by the industry to the introduction of digital tachographs, but on a positive side most of us have found the switch from analogue to digital less fraught than we expected it to be, particularly for those that have received adequate training. However, there are still concerns and frustrations, and one of the main issues relates to digital tachograph data downloading, as for many in the industry it is a completely new subject and process to manage.

Legal Requirements

The legal requirements for downloading data are that the driver card must be downloaded at least every 28 days and the VU at least once every 56 days.

Who's responsible?

It is the responsibility of the operator to ensure that the data is regularly downloaded as per the law. It must be remembered that if downloading does not occur on a regular basis that the data stored may become overwritten and lost. This would be an offence.

Downloading means copying the data together with its digital signature to ensure validity of data.

How to download

The operator is required to purchase smart card readers for downloading the driver card and portable memory devices for downloading the VU memory. Here are some option

Digidown Plus

Ideally suited to remote sites or instanced where computer access is limited. Based on the hugely successful DigiDown, this unit has the capability of being able to read and store driver card data until such time as it can be downloaded onto a computer.

Smartreader

A combined reader of analogue tachograph charts and smart cards. For use with Drivers Hours software.

Card Reader

This device downloads smart card data.

Storing Data

The operator, in order that the data can then be stored effectively, will also need to purchase appropriate computer software to ensure compliance with legislation surrounding the recording and analysis of digital data. There are a number of options available, from 'read only' systems, 'in-house' instant analysis software in the form of ClockWatcher, through to a fully comprehensive bureau service, which configures the data into easy to read reports providing both drivers' hours law and working time analysis.

Downloaded data needs to be stored securely and backed up in the event that the original copy becomes corrupt or is destroyed. Because the data is so important, it is advisable if companies aren't opting for a bureau service, to invest in a fire safe or arrange secure storage off-site in the event of an accident.

The data has to be stored for at least one year or in the case of RTD records, 2 years.

The company card is basically a key that allows the operator to access the digital data via the VU.

Workshops have the facility to download the total memory contents of the VU with the workshop card.

The enforcement bodies also have access to the entire memory via the enforcement card.

The requirement to invest in software / IT equipment is one of the most significant differences of digital as compared to analogue. The reasons for this are the fact that digital data must be stored in its original format (in a binary code), and that software, depending on the solution selected, can provide the facility to view /analyse the data. With analogue it was a lot simpler; a 'trained eye' could interpret the information from the wax discs to determine drivers' hours, which generally satisfied legal requirements.

The information here is only intended to be a basic guide. If you would like further information, please contact Tachodisc, the UK's leading supplier of analogue and digital tachograph equipment and services, with 30 years experience within the industry. Telephone 01925 283328, or email sales@tachodisc.co.uk. Alternatively, please visit www.tachodisc.co.uk