

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chief Executive Officer of the National Tyre Distributors Association (NTDA).

Founded in 1930, the NTDA is a strongly proactive trade association representing and promoting the interests of the tyre wholesale, distribution and retail sectors of the automotive aftercare market.

Members range from the largest national retail groups with hundreds of depots such as European Tyre Enterprise Ltd, (the owners of Kwik Fit, STS Tyre Pros, Central Tyre etc.), to the smallest local family run business and international tyre and equipment manufacturers.

Many NTDA members employ commercial tyre technicians who respond to roadside tyre incidents on commercial vehicles across the UK. There are an estimated 10,000 commercial tyre technicians in the UK.

Being a commercial tyre technician is a thankless task and a dangerous one too. Out in all weather conditions, at any time of day or night and working close to traffic travelling at high speed and with motorists showing no regard for amber flashing lights and the technicians working on the verges, in refuge areas or on the hard-shoulder.

Therefore, please find our responses to your questions below:

1. Have casualties, 'near misses' and wider safety concerns affected the businesses and groups you represent? If so, how?

YES: Up until 2007, news reports of tyre technicians being injured and killed at the roadside were an all too frequent occurrence. A high profile incident was the death of Gavin Sutherland a 40-year-old tyre technician in 2007. Gavin died when a truck crashed into the back of his van on the A9 eight miles south of Inverness, tragically he was one of many technicians who lost their life between a particularly bad period between 1996 and 2007. In our industry, Gavin's death and a number of other similar incidents, became a 'tipping point' and the NTDA and its members decided enough was enough and united to ensure the safety of our people. Following 4 years of work to establish industry best practice, in 2011 the association then created the REACT (Roadside Emergency Action Concerning Technicians) Steering Group to formalise much of the activity that was already underway to ensure technicians were better trained and assessed as competent to work safely.

2. What is the scale of safety incidents and near misses within the industry?

Despite the fantastic results of the REACT initiative (we haven't lost a REACT trained technician since 2011 and have trained more than 5,500 people), our technicians remain exposed to danger on a daily basis. The NTDA receives regular reports of near misses and actual RTCs. More often, these RTCs involve our technician's vans being hit, usually by passing HGVs. Attached is a document which provides two recent incident reports and two historical reports, which we have included to demonstrate the destruction of the technicians vehicles. We have received many such images and some video clips showing technicians being 'brushed' by passing vehicles whilst working on the hard shoulder.

3. What safety measures, if any, would you recommend to address safety concerns and why?

Clearly, training and education of technicians has played a major positive role in protecting our people. However, raising the awareness of all road users and alerting them to constant dangers

posed to roadside rescue and recovery workers is also essential. **Slow Down Move Over** should be a mandatory instruction in the Highway Code and we believe that the government should promote the message with a specific promotional campaign. We also believe that our recovery vehicles should be permitted to have **RED** warning lights as opposed to the amber lights currently deployed and which are, in the main, ignored by road users.

4. What effect, if any, has the Government's roll-out of All Lane Running 'Smart' motorways had on the safety on the groups you represent?

We have seen an increase in the number of 'all lane' running incidents on hard shoulders due to motorist's ignorance of the RED X signs. Our technicians tell us that the refuge areas are infrequent, too shallow, (which means they are often working right next to the passing traffic), often too small generally, (meaning they can't accommodate a recovery van, HGV and the space needed for safe working). Also if an HGV or other commercial vehicle has a tyre blow out it is unlikely that it will make it to a refuge area, which means many of our technicians are working on a live lane which was formerly the hard shoulder.

5. What measures could be taken to address any safety concerns with All Lane Running motorways?

Refuge areas need to be more frequent and larger. Lanes, (including hard shoulders used as live lanes), need to be closed immediately if a vehicle needs emergency assistance. The Highways agencies need to be more responsive and collegiate towards recovery workers who should be treated as equals and part of the emergency response 'team' and not an inconvenience. Motorists need to be better educated regarding the RED X signs and prosecuted for ignoring them as warning letters are not working. All recovery vehicles should be permitted to have RED warning lights fitted.

We trust this information is useful, but please do not hesitate to contact me if the NTDA can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Stefan

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