

The Heavy Transport Association Launches the First Abnormal Load Escort Certificates of Competence

In an industry first the Heavy Transport Association is launching a road safety initiative centred on two new Certificates of Competence issued by the City & Guilds for the drivers and managers of abnormal load Escorts. The aim of the initiative is to improve public safety through training of abnormal load escorts leading to improved competence. At the moment anyone 21 or over with a car licence, a vehicle, some amber flashing lights and an Abnormal Load sign can become an escort without any training, knowledge of the legislation or a check of competence.

There is no requirement in legislation for abnormal loads to be escorted, but large vehicles and loads are escorted in the interests of public safety. In 2004 a Code of Practice for the lighting and marking of abnormal loads and escort vehicles which also included operating procedures for the escort was issued by the Highways Agency with the support of ACPO, ACPOS, and industry represented by the RHA, FTA and HTA. It is normal practice for private escorts to look after the majority of moves and the Police where the loads are very long, wide or heavy where there is a need to control traffic.

The Highways Agency Code of Practice gave comprehensive guidance in all areas with the exception of training standards for the escort vehicle driver. In 2012 working with Skills for Logistics and the Association of Road Safety Officers (AIRSO) the HTA set out to put this right by developing training standards and qualifications which would be independently accredited. The first tranche of Government funded work saw National Occupational Standards developed and accredited and the City & Guilds were selected by the HTA as an internationally recognised qualification awarding body. The second tranche of work funded by ten HTA member companies saw the development of two courses for Abnormal Load Escorting, the first at Level 2 for Escort Drivers and the second at Level 3 for Escort Managers. After extensive consultation with the Police, government agencies, trade associations and safety organisations the courses were completed in early 2016 and the final requirement for both qualifications to go live, City & Guilds assessors were trained with a network in place covering most of the UK.

The qualifications are not compulsory for escorts or managers but they do set clearly defined and measurable standards backed by the City & Guilds who issue a Certificate of Competence and a verifiable photo Identity Card to those passing the qualifications. To ensure currency and competence the qualifications are valid for three years after which a reassessment by the City & Guilds is required. Training and assessments are now available and people interested in learning more should contact the HTA.

John Rodell Chairman of the HTA expects the Certificates of Competence to quickly become the standard required by the majority of companies moving abnormal loads by road in the UK. Rodell says “The HTA is determined to improve public safety, to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice and to make sure those who escort abnormal loads are properly trained, assessed and hold a Certificate of Competence linked to an Identity Card. We know there are many excellent escorts out there already, although there are no grandfather rights these qualifications should not cause professional escorts any concerns”.

For more information contact the Heavy Transport Association on 0844 3245300 or the Chairman of the HTA on 01980 667103 or 07967 343010.

To view the City & Guilds qualifications go to:

Escort Driver - Level 2

<https://www.nptc.org.uk/assets/documents/6b8fa8cab6e243d8a0fb73e5e73b4fe2.pdf>

Escort Manager - Level 3

<https://www.nptc.org.uk/assets/documents/41d15c5399d946489a55aa4bc486b46b.pdf>

To view the Highways England COP go to:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/503105/Lighting_and_marking_COP_for_abnormal_load_self_escorting_vehicles_HE_rebranding_v1.pdf

Ends:

Issued on: July 2016