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President
Michael Sweetmore EngTech MSOE MIRTE LCGI
Chief Executive
Bruce McGill

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Registered Office
22 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1PR
Tel: 020 7630 1111
Fax: 020 7630 6677
Email: soe@soe.org.uk
www.soe.org.uk

Editor
Will Dalrymple
Email: will.dalrymple@markallengroup.com

Contributing Editors
Steve Banner, John Challen,
Toby Clark, Laura Cork, Dan Gilkes,
Peter Shakespeare, Richard Simpson,
Chris Tindall, Lucy Radley, Brian Wall

Art Editor
Chris Charles

Production Manager
Nicki McKenna
Email: nicki.mckenna@markallengroup.com

Advertisement Manager
Craig Molloy
Email: craig.molloy@markallengroup.com
Tel: 01322 221144

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Jon Benson
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Information is king

When planning vehicle maintenance, you can opt for a time, mileage basis or a combination of both. For example, if you set out a six-week, 10,000-mile inspection frequency, some vehicles may reach the mileage threshold more quickly.

Most service and maintenance schedules are set up in line with manufacturers' recommendations which we need to adhere to, to maintain the vehicle warranty. If you plan your maintenance purely on a time basis, a vehicle might have done 10,000+ miles by the time it is presented for service. Once the mileage starts to exceed the manufacturers' recommendations, this could invalidate any future warranty claims, with the operator picking up the costs.

To assist in reducing this risk, many fleets are utilising vehicle-based telematics data so the fleet teams are aware of the vehicle usage and can adjust the maintenance demands accordingly (see also p15). That also assists with overall fleet maintenance planning and managing workshop throughput by prioritising workloads, especially at peak demand. With telematics data, we can also identify trends and react to them in a proactive manner.

Another use of vehicle data is to calculate the operational costs of vehicles on your fleet. Many vehicles require managed maintenance due to their arduous usage, and the use of telemetry assists with calculating the forecast operating costs on any vehicle. It is about having to manage expectations of capital and revenue finances between the vehicle purchase and its whole-life operating costs.

I can use that data to make informed decisions about future vehicle selections. It may be, for instance, that a lower capital cost is outweighed by increased maintenance costs later on.

Whatever vehicle you buy, it has to fit into the operating environment, in terms of what it will do and what it can carry. That will limit the number of choices; and out of the ones remaining, you can make the best judgement call.

Michael Sweetmore
President, Society of Operations Engineers



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