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### TRANSITION TO ELECTRIC VEHICLES

The transition to electric vehicles (EVs) brings its own challenges from a safety perspective.

"They function differently from conventional fuel-powered vehicles; they offer instant acceleration, regenerative braking and other advanced features," says Nick Butler, director of DriveTech.

"Their unique characteristics present risks if drivers haven't received the proper training; they must be confident behind the wheel."

In other cases, the transition to zero-emission vehicles is meaning that a number of fleets are operating older vehicles – either through keeping hold of existing vehicles for longer, or by buying used diesel vans.

Older vehicles may lack the safety technology of the newest vehicles, as well as being more susceptible to wear and tear or reliability issues, making robust management vital.

The latest Leasing Outlook report from the BVRLA (British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association) notes the complications of running electric vans is prompting some operators to schedule another cycle of diesel vans or extend replacement cycles rather than make the switch to zero tailpipe emissions.

This is backed up by last year's FN50 research of the UK's largest contract hire and leasing companies, which found the average van lease length had increased year-on-year from 43 months to 46.3 months.

The Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Mandate is also influencing fleet behaviour when it comes to procuring vans, says Shoreham Vehicle Auctions.

It adds some fleets are buying used LCVs at auction to avoid increasing pressure from OEMs to order one or more EVs for every 10 new diesel vehicles they order.

"Fleets are buying good quality used vehicles to avoid being forced to buy eLCVs from OEMs keen to meet their ZEV Mandate targets," says Alex Wright, managing director of Shoreham Vehicle Auctions.

"Many fleets are still not prepared for an electric journey as their usage and mileage sits outside the capability of current eLCVs."



"Are you actually part of the problem? Are you enabling that driver to speed because you gave them too many jobs in the time available?"

Route planning can be used to help: within software packages, priorities can be set to avoid areas where people live and work, while accident blackspots can also be avoided.

Regular health screenings and support programmes can be offered and could include eye tests, ergonomic assessments, cardiovascular health screenings and mental health resources.

The quality of a driver's diet may also be an issue as they could be grabbing food on the go, and this could lead to diabetes which is becoming a hidden epidemic in UK workplaces, says Kate Walker, managing director of the Diabetes Safety Organisation.

"We know that there are five million people with the condition and a further 12.6 million in the UK have pre-diabetes," she adds.

"These numbers are significant. If people are

unmanaged, time off work increases, there is an increased risk of accidents from those who are undiagnosed or those who are not necessarily managing it well."

Walker says when the Diabetes Safety Organisation works with companies it sees "very little understanding of diabetes".

"So almost the first failing is that it is not recognised to have any impact in the workplace. It is seen as just purely a medical condition," she adds.

"People living with diabetes have to also comply with DVLA regulations, and they fit under the Equality act because, more often than not, diabetes would be a disability.

"We really need to start a conversation around diabetes across the industry to make our roads safer and to help anyone who is living with it to feel safe to come forward."