

Is your commercial vehicle fleet roadworthy?

If fleet managers, for example, think it is expensive to maintain their fleet of delivery vans in a roadworthy condition; try a lawsuit after one of your delivery vans causes a pile-up on the highway, never mind the loss of innocent lives and bad PR.

South Africa's main arteries are often blocked on a daily basis due to broken-down trucks and busses. This costs our economy millions if not billions of Rands in terms of companies' logistics and deliveries coming to a standstill, business time lost and extra fuel spent.

Fleet managers and business owners need to ensure that their trucks, busses and delivery vans are always in a roadworthy condition. While many companies are conscientious and do keep their fleet of commercial vehicles in a roadworthy condition, many don't bother at all. For example, it is a common sight to see a truck driving at night with rear lights that don't work and one working headlight.

What is the big deal about having a roadworthy truck or bus?

Vehicle roadworthy tips and driving safety in general are usually on companies' agenda during the holiday season, especially over the festive season. However, these are also every-day issues, which are caused by daily travel and general wear and tear.



Jan Novak via [123RF](#)

Business owners should not only make sure their trucks are roadworthy for their safety and other road users' safety, but also because their insurance policies may not pay out if they are in an accident.

According to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, approximately 20% of minibus taxi accidents involve tyre failure.

The Automobile Association said: "seven to ten percent of vehicle crashes are related to vehicles that are not roadworthy." While to most business owners this may seem like a small percentage, but they should remember that many technical items are grouped together under 'roadworthiness'. For example, a large windscreen chip is less likely to cause an accident, but worn tyres, a cracked chassis and worn brake pads are likely to cause an accident.

Affordable maintenance

Some commercial vehicle owners may feel that they cannot afford to keep their trucks and delivery vans in a roadworthy condition, but this is often not true. For example, there may be high quality, cheaper, non-branded truck and trailer parts, which could be used without compromising the vehicle's performance or its safe usage. Fleet managers should be cautioned against using poor quality parts, which do not meet the vehicle manufacturer's specifications.

Arrive Alive, the champion of road users' safety, has provided useful advice to check if their trucks or busses are roadworthy via their [website](#). These DIY tips cover topics that include braking systems, tyres, steering, windcreens, lights, vehicle body checks and more. Remember that commercial vehicle maintenance should always be carried out by qualified mechanics or technicians.

Fleet managers must remember to enforce driver safety initiatives for their bus and truck drivers. *Arrive Alive* also provides tips for commercial vehicle drivers, which should be followed at all times.

How bad is it really?

The Automobile Association paints a grim picture: "it has been repeatedly noted that when a random selection of heavy vehicles is pulled off the road and put through roadworthiness checked, up to half of vehicles fail." Such non-roadworthy trucks may have cracked mirrors, worn-out tyres, and faulty head and tail lights, brake lights, indicator lights, brakes and more.

An example of the seriousness of the situation was when a large truck (whose brakes failed) ploughed into many cars in Alberton, Gauteng recently. Many innocent lives were unfortunately lost on that day.

It is not all doom and gloom

There are many pluses for business owners to keep their commercial vehicles in a roadworthy condition. If companies maintain their trucks, busses and panel vans properly, they could save thousands of Rands on fuel costs, in the long term. This is the case, because if a commercial vehicle is being operated as the manufacturer intended, then it will run efficiently and use the least amount of fuel. Companies may also be able to prevent extremely costly major repairs like engine failures. Last, it is imperative that logistics companies' deliver their cargo on time, which won't be the case always if their trucks or vans breakdown often due to poor maintenance.

Commercial vehicles play a crucial role in the South African economy. With their importance comes the responsibility for their safe operation, which companies and business owners should take seriously.

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