

DISCUSSING THE MOT

Sid Swaine explains why he believes discounting the MOT test has a detrimental effect on the industry and why the test is in need of an overhaul.



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MOT test discounting is an unacceptable marketing initiative and should not form part of a distress advertising campaign in my view. This devalues vehicle safety and it is not the way to address declining absorption or to up-sell work. It would be interesting to learn what percentage of consumers actually end up paying the advertised ‘headline’ price for their MOT test...

The test is in much need of an overhaul: modern day vehicles are very different from those produced and tested when the MOT test was introduced some 50 years ago. But of course, old vehicles are presented too, and current the test procedure recognises this.

There has been well documented activity regarding change to MOT test frequency, and there’s a good argument to suggest it is well overdue. When I joined the franchise world in 1980, we were just moving away from a lubrication at three and a full service at six thousand miles. This was subsequently extended to five and ten thousand. Today it is circa twenty thousand between visits! Vehicle integrity and safety can change dramatically during these driven miles. Cars accelerate, corner, brake and handle very differently to those of yesteryear and this can lead to greater stress and deterioration of components, even though the quality of materials have improved.

There is even discussion going on that could see test centres not being able to repair. Does this mean there is doubt about the necessity for some identified repairs? Could this be eradicated by having a set test fee (no discount) and testers not being incentivised to find advisories and or failure items?

A NEW SYSTEM...

I believe the test should be both time and/or mileage related. Some vehicles could easily travel a 100,000 miles in three years and not need an MOT until the anniversary date – madness!

The authorities have legislated that licenced taxis (mini cabs) have a test every six months and how are they different to high mileage vehicles?

The first test should remain at 3 years with the introduction of a mileage cap of thirty thousand miles – whichever coming soonest being the trigger to test

– but this test should not be in the current format. It should test lights, alignment and tyres with a general health inspection of brakes (visual not rolling road), that would command a reduced fee of £30. Then annually or at twenty thousand mile intervals, the test as we know it today should be held. There is no real need to check emissions until 60,000 miles since the modern day car does this anyway and if a fault exists, the light glows on the dash board.

There will be industry professionals that agree and those that don’t, but I would argue that any vehicle inspection should be relevant – tapping the cills of a three year old galvanised or aluminium car is hardly necessary.

VOSA has recently made some changes to brake testing, in particular rear balance, and this has caused some well documented confusion amongst testers and AEs alike. VOSA is aware of this and is working towards a solution. Whilst this change in test procedure is valid, as brake imbalance can cause

vehicle instability, especially at speed, how does this change affect four wheel drive vehicles utilising the Bowmonk brake tester?

FAULT FINDING

I have a library of reported MOT failure faults. These defects include a cracked wheel on a prestige German sports car, tyres worn showing steel cords on the inner edge, two inner tyre walls split to the cords on a car presented for its first MOT at only 9,000 miles (tyres were OE), and many other examples that would have culminated in failure and increased the risk to road user safety.

With the advancement in vehicle technology and oil quality – visits to the workshop are reduced, removing the opportunity to identify such faults. This makes the role of the MOT all the more crucial. Let’s not devalue it... ■

Do you agree with Sid? Does the MOT test need an overhaul? Is it being devalued through discounting? What should the MOT look like to reflect the demands of the modern motor vehicle? Please have your say. Tweet me @MIMeditor, email timk@theimi.org.uk or comment on our LinkedIn group discussion page.

