



# CASE STUDY

## Winter Maintenance Driver Training

### Introduction

Together with our associated companies, Ringway is responsible for maintaining over 50,000 kms of the UK's highways network – we deliver specialist highway services across the largest highways maintenance portfolio within the UK, including strategic road network, DBFO motorway and trunk roads, and the local authority network.

We offer best practice maintenance services through local solutions which make an impact in the communities in which we operate. We take pride in offering a dedicated, flexible approach which supports our clients, underpinned by the recruitment, development and retention of a locally based workforce and supported by a close community of trusted supply-chain partners.



### Scott Wardrop, Eurovia UK Chief Executive

"We operate from the North of Scotland to the South West tip of England, with many and varied operations that necessitate rigorous management of risk. We firmly believe that all our people, including our supply chain, come to work and must go home safe – in body and in mind. We try to be very passionate when it comes to managing and leading health, safety and wellbeing, keeping our message fresh, appropriate and genuine, while making all levels in our organisation visible, accessible and inclusive. We are proud to be part of Driving for Better Business and hope we can work with all the partners to make our roads safer."



## Preparing for driving in severe weather

Driving in severe winter conditions is one of the highest risk activities which is carried out within our industry. However, standard industry competency requirements do not provide drivers with the skills to drive in these conditions.

Driving a gritter in particular is a very challenging experience and current industry training does not take into account how to drive an 18-tonne vehicle on snow and ice.

To improve the skills of our drivers in these high-risk conditions, we developed a more 'hands-on' approach to driver training.

We designed, developed and implemented a new approach to training with our supply chain partner; R3 Rockingham, to develop a bespoke Winter Maintenance Driver Training Course. We worked closely with R3Rockingham to develop the course criteria to meet our requirements. We used our extensive experience of providing the winter service for more than 20 highways authorities up and down the country including insight into the types of incidents, the main risks to our drivers to develop key risk factors. This resulted in a course that is based on facts, is specific to our workforce, and as a result is both interactive and engaging.

One key challenge was to find a facility that would accommodate our winter fleet, to simulate winter driving conditions. The Thruxton Circuit near Andover was identified as one of few sites able to accommodate larger vehicles on a low friction surface track.

## Creating a safe environment to test high risk winter driving conditions

The Thruxton Circuit has a low friction surface where we could replicate a skid situation. Our aim was to provide drivers with the experience of driving a gritter in a difficult situation that replicated real life risk, such as a skid, but in a safe and controlled environment.

This ability to drive in real life winter conditions, certainly had more impact than a video or words alone. Using low friction surfaces, we provide anti-collision training using active safety systems along with practical experience of how they work and why they are in the vehicle.

Although only one gritter is used at a time, we provided options to use two gritting vehicles; one fully stocked and one empty, which dramatically changes the characteristics of the vehicle and driver response options.

The training was broken into a number of modules, starting with an induction session and including a pre-course test. The test was then taken again at the end of the day to assess levels of learning and understanding.

Other modules include: emergency stops, recognition and correction techniques, driving away safely, skid recognition, observation, speed and spatial awareness and slow manoeuvres. There is also a practical module of fitting and removing a plough safely; a key activity which is carried out under difficult weather conditions within poor visibility.

## Safety for a reason - supporting our employees and sharing best practice

The first tranche of the winter maintenance driver training took place in 2017. We trained 206 front line drivers at Thruxton Circuit that year; in 2018 a further 500 drivers attended the course. With over 700 drivers trained at a cost of over £350,000, this is truly an investment in our driver's safety.

Prior to the training, we had two incidents where a gritter left the road and turned over. This resulted in a significant cost to the business but also a real risk of serious or fatal injuries. In the winter season of 2017/8 we didn't have any significant winter maintenance related incidents.

Our approach to safety, including road risk, is really is 'safety for a reason'. We identify risk, invest in control measures and monitor outcomes. We believe this level of training should be the benchmark for all winter drivers across the industry as it gives them practical experience to understand and control their vehicles in what could be the most hazardous activity they carry out.



### David Campbell, HS&E Director

"Since January 2009 the management of road risk / fleet safety has been part of our management of health and safety at work. The management of road risk is no different to the management of any other risk to the business. With this ethos in mind we have made considerable progress through to 2019. The management of road risk is now well established in the business and seen as being key to our success."