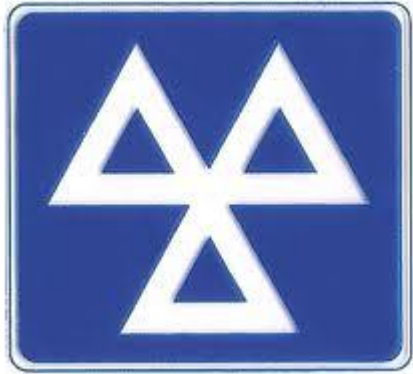


## TESTING TIMES

After much debate and the proffering of many opinions from all sides, the Department for Transport has made what should be regarded as a



sensible decision and decided to stick with our present MOT testing intervals, which were established in 1967. The proposal was to change our present 3-1-1 testing periods to 4-2-2 and while this may work elsewhere it can only do so where the background to car repair and modification is different to that in the UK. Another recent consultation exercise proposed that the Test be

scrapped for vehicles that were of pre-1960 manufacture, but there also seems little justification for this along with many obvious arguments against it.

Here in Britain anyone can work on or modify a vehicle and there is no standard for components outside the normal legal constraints, nothing like the TUV system in Germany for instance. Given our rather unregulated approach to vehicle maintenance an annual inspection is essential, especially as so many of the vehicles submitted for the Test fail on the most obvious items such as lights and tyres. The prospect of the initial Test after four years and then once every two years was rightly regarded with alarm by those with an interest in road safety, the latter-day hugely extended service intervals often meaning that some cars only ever visit a garage for their annual test during the course of a year, especially if the owner is looking to have the car serviced when it reaches the stated mileage interval rather than annually.



Additionally there have been some changes to the Test from January this year –some sensible, others less so– and further amendments operating only in an advisory capacity at present will become part of the examination from April. The certificate itself changed in October last year too, it now being very simply printed on a sheet of plain paper. A good feature of this redesign is the incorporation of advisory points into the Test document, although by its nature it is now very easy to tamper with and if purchasing a vehicle –especially if privately– it would be wise to check the MOT status online first.



If you visit <http://motinfo.direct.gov.uk/internet/jsp/ECHID-Internet-History-Request.jsp> with a registration number and either an MOT certificate number or a Registration Document number you can access the MOT status and also the MOT history of a vehicle for the period since the computer system replaced the manual version in 2005. It has all come a long way from when the Ten Year Test was introduced in 1960 for vehicles over that age and although the present system may not be perfect, without starting again with a clean sheet of paper it is probably about as good as something which has evolved over more than fifty years can be.

Perhaps I should close by reinforcing what the Test actually means. It is simply a basic safety check which reflects the condition of the vehicle on the day of presentation and so offers no guarantees as to its future performance. For instance, to pass the Test the front brake pads need only have 1.5mm remaining (and that's if the tester can see them without removing the wheels), so a certificate is not necessarily the key to a year's trouble-free motoring – as some drivers choose to think!



By the way, why do we call it the MOT? After the Ministry of Transport, which was active from 1919 to 1970 and again briefly from 1979 to 1981.

***MJB***