

DRIVING EFFICIENCY UP AND COSTS DOWN THROUGH FORS

Membership of TFL's **Freight Operators Recognition Scheme (FORS)** is helping **DHL Express** in Wapping make its operations even more efficient, driving down costs and fuel consumption, among other benefits.

DHL is the global market leader of the international express and logistics industry, and closer to home, thousands of London businesses and residents rely on DHL to manage their delivery needs swiftly and efficiently.

DHL Express Wapping, located in Wapping Lane, covers the whole of the City, Canary Wharf and E1 and N1 postcodes. Daily, the team handle many thousands of shipments and complete up to 80 collection/delivery runs through a fleet of 29 standard and long wheelbase transit type vans. DHL Wapping employs 24 drivers and 14 contract drivers (self-employed with their own vehicles).

Achieving FORS bronze accreditation in August 2008, the Wapping branch was the first DHL Express Service Centre to join up with the scheme. Their experience has triggered interest from other DHL Service Centres, with the whole of the DHL International Express UK business now holding bronze membership status. DHL is now looking to expand this throughout its other business divisions in the UK.

Several reasons prompted DHL Wapping's interest in FORS, who realised there were valuable benefits in membership, including driver training, expert advice on reducing penalty charge notices and networking opportunities with other local businesses to discuss experience and share best practice. As a responsible operator, DHL also wanted to be recognised for following best practice.

The FORS benefits started with accreditation, when DHL Wapping worked with the Metropolitan Police's Commercial Vehicle Education Unit.

"The audit covered many of our existing processes, so it was a good feeling for these to be endorsed," says Tony Brett, DHL's Wapping Service Centre Manager, "and it threw up some new ideas, such as segregating additional public walkways from our parking areas.

And since accreditation the FORS benefits have continued to flow, with expert advice and input. "We've supplemented our practices on fuel efficiency with some further tips from the FORS specialist," says Tony, "and made some adjustments to our routes, making them more direct.

Transport for London

FORS membership is also an advantage for DHL's commercial division in their work with both existing customers (70% are major financial institutions) and when tendering for new business.

"Recognisable standards of quality, efficiency and corporate responsibility, such as ISO, are required both by many of our customers, but also prospects before we can do business with them.

"FORS membership has really added to our capital in this regard. We are a high quality, responsible operator and it is important to be recognised for following best practice, says Tony.

"With FORS, we can give customers absolute assurances regarding our fleet efficiency and sustainable approach."

Guidance on reducing penalty charge notices (PCN's) has also had a real impact for DHL Wapping. Two PCN workshops have been held at the Service Centre, with learnings passed on to drivers via staff briefings.

"It's easy to dismiss PCNs as an occupational hazard," says Tony, "but with FORS guidance we've made great progress.

Since October 2008, DHL Wapping has been steadily reducing its fines. In December 2009 and January 2009, the number of PCN's received was 47% lower than in October.

DHL attributes this to a combination of working with local authorities, trade associations, FORS advice and continuously evaluating its own processes. However, DHL acknowledges that the FORS connection has been a great contributor in reducing PCN liability.

As well as the workshops, FORS provides members with regular updates on loading time changes, enabling operators like DHL to pinpoint optimum stopping/loading windows and plan deliveries and collections accordingly without the risk of attracting costly fines.

"We'll continue to build on our progress with penalty charges," says Tony. "Our FORS expert has suggested a visit to a local authority PCN unit, where we can build our understanding of these organisations and how we can work with them."

DHL Express in Wapping has now achieved FORS silver status. "We wanted to get the next level as quickly as possible," said Tony Brett, "and then go for gold."