



OPERATOR GUIDE

How to score well in a TEVR

What actually decides a DVSA Traffic Examiner Visit Report — and the three findings that go straight to the Traffic Commissioner.



I have sat through a lot of these, on both sides of the table. The operators who come out of a TEVR well are almost never the ones with the tidiest folders. They are the ones who understood what the visit actually was before it started.

Here is what I would want you to know.

1 What a TEVR is, and why you have got one

TEVR stands for Traffic Examiner Visit Report. A DVSA Traffic Examiner attends your premises, works through a structured form covering drivers' hours, tachographs, Working Time, driver licensing and the systems behind them, and scores each area. On rare occasions it is done remotely, but it is normally in person.

The important part is why it is happening. **A TEVR is usually a means of getting to the bottom of something.** Something has put you on their list — roadside encounters, a pattern in your data, a complaint, an MOT record, or intelligence from somewhere else entirely. The examiner will not tell you what it was, and asking will not get you an answer.

Do not spend your preparation guessing at the trigger. Assume they already know more about your operation than you would like, and prepare accordingly.



ANPR does not need a witness, a complaint or a roadside stop. It just records where your vehicles go.

ANPR: the trigger nobody expects

If you want one concrete answer to “why us?”, this is the most common one I see: **automatic number plate recognition**.

ANPR cameras log where your vehicles actually are. When the same vehicle is picked up making regular daily or weekly visits to a location that is not your registered operating centre, that pattern is visible long before anybody knocks on your door. No complaint is needed. No roadside stop. Just a record building quietly in the background.

Why this matters more than it sounds

It is exactly the evidence that makes the first of the three straight-to-OTC findings so difficult to argue with. By the time an examiner asks where you keep your vehicles, they may already have months of data showing where the vehicles have really been — and you are being asked to confirm, not to explain.

The practical test is simple, and worth doing honestly this week. **Where do your vehicles genuinely spend the night?** Not where the licence says. Not where you intended when you applied. Where the drivers actually park them — at home, at a yard nearer the work, at a customer’s site because it saves forty minutes in the morning.

If the honest answer is anywhere other than your authorised operating centre, deal with that before it is put to you. Applying to vary your licence, or adding the centre properly, is an ordinary piece of administration. Being shown a pattern of ANPR hits you cannot account for is not.

2 The tachograph request: they analyse before they arrive

Ahead of the visit you will normally be asked to send **.ddd tachograph files, typically covering three to six months, for both driver cards and vehicle units**. Send exactly the period asked for, in full.

Then understand what happens next. That data is analysed *before* the examiner arrives. By the time they sit down with you, they have the infringement patterns, the missing mileage, the gaps between card-out and card-in, and the vehicles that moved when nobody was logged in.

Tachograph data does not lie and it does not hide. Do not try to make it.

I have watched operators talk their way into far more trouble than the data alone would ever have caused them, because they offered an explanation that the file in front of the examiner contradicted.

The practical consequence is this: **most questions on the day are confirmations, not enquiries**. They are checking whether your account matches what they have already read. Treat every question as though the answer is already on the desk, because it usually is.

3 The three that go straight to the Traffic Commissioner

Everything else on the form is a score. These three are a decision. If any of them is red, expect a report to the Office of the Traffic Commissioner regardless of how well the rest of the visit went:

Any one of these can end in a report to the Traffic Commissioner

- 1 **Not parking at your designated operating centre** — vehicles habitually kept somewhere other than the authorised centre. And yes, occasionally the operating centre turns out not to exist in any usable form at all. It happens more often than you would think.
- 2 **The Transport Manager not in role, or not present for the visit** — a TM who has left, who is nominal, who cannot be produced, or who does not turn up on the day. Continuous and effective management is a condition of the licence, not an aspiration.
- 3 **Shortcomings similar to those identified at a previous Public Inquiry** — if you have been before a Traffic Commissioner and the same failings are back, the only question left is what the regulator does about it.

If you know one of these applies to you, that changes your preparation entirely. It stops being about scoring well and starts being about what you can demonstrably fix before the report is written — and about getting proper representation lined up.

4 How the scoring works

A lower score is better. Zero means the system is satisfactory. Broadly: 1–5 means minor shortcomings to close, 6–10 means significant failings, and 11 or more is likely to mean a report to the OTC.

You can score yourself against the same structure the examiner uses with our **free TEVR self-assessment** (theftc.co.uk/TEVR-Self-Assess/). It runs entirely in your browser and nothing you type is sent to us — which matters, because the exercise is only worth doing if you answer it honestly.

5 On the day: the tone trap



A relaxed conversation is not the same as a good outcome. Answer as though every word is going into the report.

This is the one that catches people out, and I want to be blunt about it.

The examiner will usually be jovial, reasonable and understanding. The written report will not be.

The conversation is often relaxed, even friendly. The document that lands afterwards is far more direct and far more revealing than the tone on the day suggested it would be.

Do not mistake a pleasant conversation for a good outcome. Operators regularly tell me the visit “went really well” and are genuinely shocked by what arrives in writing. Nothing has gone wrong — a professional was being professional, and then wrote down what they found.

Answer as though every word is going into the report, because in substance it is.

6 Mitigation: framing works, excuses do not

Mitigation is not an excuse. But properly framed, it does count. Examiners are not robots and neither are you — they understand a driver who lied, a period of illness, a supplier who let you down, a system that failed for a fortnight while somebody was off.

Two rules, though.

They have heard every story there is. Do not lay it on too thick. The moment mitigation starts sounding rehearsed or excessive, it stops helping and starts costing you credibility — and credibility is the currency of the whole exercise.

Spend most of your words on what you changed, not on why it happened. One honest sentence of explanation followed by dated evidence of the fix is worth five paragraphs of context. The regulator is not really asking why you failed. They are asking whether it will happen again.

7 Your 14 days



Evidence the fix with dated documents. Saying you have addressed it is not the same as showing it.

You are normally given **14 days to reply to the findings**. That window is the most valuable thing you will be given in this process, and it is routinely wasted.

A good reply does four things:

- **Addresses every finding in turn**, in the examiner's own order, so nothing looks avoided.
- **Evidences the fix with dated documents** — the new process, the training record, the first month of it actually working. Saying you have addressed it is not the same as showing it.
- **Does not dispute a finding unless it is factually wrong**. If it is wrong, say so plainly and prove it. If it is right, arguing costs you the credibility you need for everything else.
- **Says who owns each fix and by when**, so the reply reads as a plan rather than a promise.

If a report goes to the OTC anyway, this document becomes part of the story a Traffic Commissioner reads about you. Write it accordingly.

8 Be honest, because it comes out in the wash

Everything above reduces to one thing. The data is already analysed, the examiner already has most of the answers, and the parts they cannot see will surface later anyway — at the next visit, in the next download, or under questioning at a Public Inquiry where the stakes are considerably higher.

An operator who says “that one is on us, here is what we have done since” is in a far stronger position than one who is caught constructing a version of events. I have never once seen concealment improve an outcome. I have seen it turn a manageable score into a referral more times than I can count.

The whole guide in one line

Be honest. It comes out in the wash either way — and honesty is the only version of the story where you get credit for it.

If you want help

We prepare operators for Traffic Examiner visits, sit in on them, and draft the 14-day response. If a report has already gone to the Traffic Commissioner we also handle **Public Inquiry representation**

(theftc.co.uk/public-inquiry-a-valuable-tool/).

Before that, two things worth doing yourself: score your operation with the **free TEVR self-assessment** (theftc.co.uk/TEVR-Self-Assess/), and read **Transport Compliance 101** (theftc.co.uk/transport-compliance-101/), which covers the everyday failings that put operators in front of an examiner in the first place. If the honest answer to “could I produce the evidence?” is no, a **compliance audit** (theftc.co.uk/audit/) is the fastest way to find out what is missing while you still have time to fix it.