

# Appendix 1: Methodology

This report examined how effectively the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency enforces regulations on commercial vehicles. The main elements of our fieldwork, which took place between February and May 2009, were:

Selected method	Purpose
<p><b>1. Area visits</b></p> <p>We visited 7 Area Offices and 3 Regional Intelligence Units, chosen according to performance characteristics and geographical location.</p> <p>We visited:</p> <p>West and Southwest Scotland (Area 2)</p> <p>Merseyside and Cheshire (Area 6)</p> <p>Central and South West Midlands (Area 8)</p> <p>South East (Area 14)</p> <p>Metropolitan (Area 15)</p> <p>East Midlands (Area 18)</p> <p>West and North Yorkshire (Area 22)</p> <p>Edinburgh Regional Intelligence Unit</p> <p>Leeds Regional Intelligence Unit</p> <p>Birmingham Regional Intelligence Unit</p> <p>At each visit, we interviewed the Area Manager, Senior Vehicle Examiner and Senior Traffic Examiner, using a semi-structured interview format. We also attended a roadside check at each Area at which members of NAO staff shadowed Agency staff, and a visit to an operator's premises.</p>	<p>To gather primary data about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets and planning</li> <li>• Use of intelligence</li> <li>• Types of enforcement work</li> <li>• Resourcing</li> <li>• Equipment</li> <li>• Roadside facilities</li> <li>• Joint working</li> <li>• Data sharing</li> </ul> <p>To gather evidence about the practical conduct of compliance activities through observing around 60 roadside inspections and 7 operator premises visits.</p>
<p><b>2. Interviews</b></p> <p>We conducted semi-structured interviews with 19 individuals within the Department for Transport and the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency.</p> <p>We interviewed senior staff in the Department's Motoring and Freight Services Directorate with responsibilities covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsorship and governance</li> <li>• Strategy</li> <li>• Fixed penalties</li> <li>• Finance</li> </ul> <p>We also interviewed Agency staff with</p>	<p>To gather evidence about the setting of enforcement strategies and targets; resourcing of compliance activities and performance reporting; the conduct of joint inspections and the effectiveness of data sharing with other agencies, and the application of available sanctions.</p>

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responsibilities covering:

- Intelligence
- Planning
- Finance
- Facilities and estates
- National and regional management and operations
- Legal services
- Joint working
- High Risk Traffic Initiative

We also interviewed the Senior Traffic Commissioner, Philip Brown, and conducted two interviews with the UK Border Agency and HM Revenue & Customs.

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### 3. Consultation

We conducted a written consultation with senior officials in 28 organisations:

- Port of Dover
- Port of Holyhead
- Port of Liverpool
- Port of Felixstowe
- Port of Portsmouth
- Port of Poole
- Port of Tyne
- Eurotunnel
- Road Haulage Association
- Freight Transport Association
- Confederation of Passenger Transport
- British Vehicle Rental & Leasing Association
- Denby Transport Limited
- CEVA Logistics
- Association of Chief Police Officers
- Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary
- Strathclyde Police
- Leicestershire Police
- West Yorkshire Police
- Cheshire Police
- Sussex Police
- Northamptonshire Police

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To establish their perceptions about the efficiency and effectiveness of the Agency's enforcement activity and to identify scope for improvements.

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- Kent Police
  - Merseyside Police
  - Metropolitan Police
  - Warwickshire Police
  - Bedfordshire Police
  - National Roads Policing Intelligence Forum

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**4. Review of risk scoring system and road safety data**

To assess the extent to which the Agency's risk-based targeting system reflects the actual risks to road safety posed by commercial vehicles.

We commissioned consultants, Risk Solutions, to review of the principles of the Agency's risk rating system. They analysed a two-year sample of risk scores to assess the impact of changes in score. They also analysed the Department's road safety data, the Agency's accident database and roadside check database. They compared the Agency's risk score to the road safety risk.

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**5. Financial data analysis**

To identify how the Agency's enforcement activity is funded and to establish the relative cost effectiveness of different elements of a range of individual activities.

We analysed the Agency's annual accounts, scheme accounts, Areas' expenditure summaries, Regional Intelligence Units' expenditure summaries, and High Risk Traffic Initiative year-end report.

We reviewed minutes from the Department's Enforcement Board, which oversees the Agency's activities, and interviewed relevant staff in the Department.

We interviewed the Agency's Finance Director and Corporate Accountant.

Further information about the benefit cost calculation is at Appendix 2.

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**6. Performance data analysis**

To gather evidence about the numbers and proportions of Agency examinations and sanctions to compare performance over time and between Areas.

We reviewed secondary data from a number of sources including:

- The Agency's performance data.
- Annual fleet compliance check data.
- Prosecutions data.
- Risk score data.

We interviewed staff in the Strategic Analysis Unit to understand better the Agency's performance reporting and analysis function.

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**7. Document review**

To assess the administrative and strategic context of enforcement.

We reviewed key documents from the

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Department, the Agency, other bodies such as the UK Border Agency, and research reports, including:

- The Department's HGV Compliance strategy scope
  - The Agency's operations manual
  - High Risk Traffic Initiative presentation
  - Evidence given to the Transport Select Committee
  - Enforcement site analysis by the Transport Research Laboratory
  - Review of the South East pilot (prior to the High Risk Traffic Initiative)
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