What are we taking on here?” I thought as we prepared for our first Brake & Tyre Watch training session to be staged in a neighbouring country. Would their legislation be the same as ours? And how would they accept a bunch of South African ‘lorrie lovers’ telling them how to do their jobs? And what would their level of skills be? We know that in South Africa, traffic officials are sadly lacking in knowledge of trucks but would it be different in Namibia?

Well, the worry was totally unfounded. We were warmly welcomed by everyone and the training went off without a hitch. As for the relevance of our South Africa legislation to that of Namibia’s, there are very few differences but just in case, I asked Craig Proctor-Parker, MD of Accident Specialist and one of our team member partners, to check it all out beforehand. The end result was that although some differences

For the first time in the history of the FleetWatch Brake & Tyre Watch project, the team travelled cross border to Namibia followed an invitation from the Namibian Roads Authority for us to visit their country and empower their local traffic officials with knowledge on spotting signs of unroadworthy trucks. And what a success the two-day exercise proved to be with some 80 or so appreciative traffic officials attending the training in Windhoek. And the trucks were not too bad either writes Patrick O’Leary.
do exist, we basically went on OEM specifications - which was just fine. One of the differences we found most interesting is that a truck tractor with a heavy oil leak gets a Discontinuation of Service notice. In Namibia it’s called a Notice of Suspension and is issued in terms of Regulation 163 of the Road Traffic and Transport Regulations 2001. Wow! How’s that. You get taken off the road for oil leaks. Don’t leave your mess on our roads. Yeah!

As for the condition of the seven trucks brought in on the second practical day for testing, we found a number of similar faults to what we find on rigs in South Africa. What did stand out was that operators up there pay better attention to the condition of their tyres as evidenced by not many tyre faults being found. They do, however, need to pay greater attention to their braking systems and other safety critical items for out of the seven trucks tested, five failed due to serious faults.

One thing though is that we did not find any real, yuk ‘truck dogs’ as we often find in South Africa - you know, where there are no brake linings in the drums, or where the driver’s steering column is being held together with duct tape - that sort of thing. That was encouraging and we urge the traffic authorities to implement the training they received to get their operators totally up to scratch. They are not far off the mark but there are some serious safety critical areas that need attention – and the quicker the better for there have been some horrendous truck crashes on Namibia’s roads. We hope our efforts will eliminate such incidents.

A Q&A session at the end of the training proved to be a lot of fun with the winner walking away with an accident investigation kit donated by Accident Specialist MD Craig Proctor-Parker.
**Brake & Tyre Watch**

**Brake & Tyre Watch Training Day**

Traffic Officials are trained prior to the hands-on testing day. Training is an important component of the project, for it is very difficult to stop a truck in a roadblock and ascertain whether or not the brakes and tyres are functional. New braking systems are continually being introduced into new trucks coming into the market, therefore our intention is to offer on-going training to traffic officials to help them better conduct their task out on the road. Training is given free of charge in the interest of road safety by our Industry Partners. Each full day’s training session focuses on the quality of brake maintenance and determining braking efficiency, through to tyre faults and general issues. It also includes a practical check with a roadworthy truck and trailer.

**Brake & Tyre Watch Practical Test Day Event**

Our hands-on test day is held at a Vehicle Testing station in the selected Province. The modus operandi on the day is to randomly select trucks from the closest main route (N1/N3/N4) as well as urban centres and put them through a Brake Roller Test so as to ascertain the state of brakes and braking systems on each vehicle. The vehicles are also checked in the pit for trailer defects and other faults. In order for us to conduct the tests, we work closely with Provincial Traffic Officials and the SAPS in the selected area. The same Traffic Officials who received training on the previous day assist us in putting the trucks off the road and into the testing area. The rationale behind this is that all too often accidents are blamed on two things - either ‘the brakes failed’ or ‘the tyre burst’. FleetWatch contends that brakes only fail if you fail to put your foot on the brake pedal or alternatively when the operator has failed to maintain the braking system. It is the latter area of neglect that concerns us.

It is a sad fact that many operators, due to the pressures to deliver combined with the current negative economic climate, are skipping their scheduled maintenance intervals - a worrying trend with dire consequences. In an effort to avoid an escalation of this trend, FleetWatch publishes the actual results of what we find. Brakes, even though they are a hidden component, together with tyres are the most critical safety items on a vehicle and need to be maintained to the highest standards. FleetWatch would like to thank each of our partners for their time, effort and dedication to this project. Your passion and commitment goes a long way towards making a difference. As we always say; ‘If it helps to save just one life, it will have all been worthwhile.’

**Engineered to Save Lives**

**A Initiative**
One always gets a little anxious on the first day of training when waiting for the delegates to arrive for the 8.00am start. Will they all come? We’ve had it once in the past. It was last year when only 25 of the expected 60 or so members of the Road Traffic Management Corporation actually turned up. So much effort goes into these training projects with our partners throwing their full weight into each event. It is also very costly. So, as organisers, we do tend to get a bit anxious.

In Windhoek, however, come 8.00am and we had a full house with everyone in their places ready to begin. That’s just one of the things that impressed us about the Namibian cops. They are disciplined and on time, everytime. Our local fellas could learn a lot from their Namibian counterparts.

From start to finish, the theory day was interactive and vibrant with our expert partners imparting valuable knowledge and fielding great questions from the cops. It was a day of true empowerment.

Trainers (l-r):
Craig Proctor-Parker; Accident Specialist with an attendee receiving his prize; Cynthia Bulekiwe from Orafoi; Keith Smuts and Jacques Coetzer from BPW Axles.
It’s only when you know what to look for that you will realise that what often looks good on the outside, is not that great on the inside – the inside in this case being underneath a truck tractor and trailer. It is here where many safety critical faults are found. With our expert trainers from our partner companies leading the cops and pointing out the positioning and functioning of various components, the teams were able to examine the rigs in detail and were surprised at the number of faults found which led to five out of the seven trucks brought in for testing, failing. As an empowerment exercise, the project was a total success and FleetWatch has been asked to return with the Brake & Tyre Watch team to train even more cops from around Namibia. As Absai Thomas, Assistant Superintendent of the City Police, Windhoek said: “The whole exercise was “an eye opener”.

Failed... 5 out of 7 inspected

Expert trainer Jacques Coetzer from BPW Axles points out the gap between the brake lining and drum on this axle which effectively means no braking. The rig was served with a Notice of Suspension.

Left-top-middle-bottom

Tyre inspections led by Dries Venter of Bridgestone covered not only visible faults but also how to understand the different tyre markings on the sidewalls including where to find the tread depth indicators. It was then into the pit to check the underside of the rigs.

The passionate Kathy Bell from Standard Bank, who we affectionately refer to as the ‘Mother Trucker’, with Richard Groenewald, vehicle examiner at the Windhoek Testing Station.
For some of the cops, this was the first time they had been in a pit to inspect the underside of a trailer. BPW’s Jacques Coetzer was there to show them the ropes.

The large chunk in the sidewall of this tyre makes it dangerous and illegal. Take it off.

This is a total gemors and those in-line connections are illegal. The one had an audible air leak.

One of the suspension notices issued on the day. This one took forever to write given the long list of faults found.

A team waits for a rig to reach them for an outside inspection before heading to the pit.

And this is an example of what they saw in the pits. Note the gap between the brake lining and the brake drum. No brakes.

A used DAF truck imported from Europe. It had many faults including the broken tail lights below. It failed.

Bridgestone’s Dries Venter leads a team to the front of this rig to inspect the tyres on the truck tractor.

NAMIBIA
At every Brake & Tyre Watch event, we invite a different truck OEM to join us - not only to highlight to the cops the safety features of today’s modern trucks but also to provide what we refer to as a ‘good’ truck to demonstrate to the cops what a roadworthy truck and trailer should be like. For the Namibian event, Iveco was our participating OEM partner and they really threw in all effort to make it a success. Not only did they provide an Iveco Trakker 440 demo truck tractor with a borrowed trailer for the practical test day but its local dealership, Africa Commercial Vehicles, also kindly provided the FleetWatch team with a luxury Iveco Daily bus to shuttle us around. Thank you Iveco, for all the effort you put into this event.

Iveco brought in the 'good' truck

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Moving the team - the Iveco Daily bus certainly lived up to its name in terms of spacious luxury and comfort.

Iveco’s team from left: Thelma van Rensburg, Gunter Wilckens, Africa Commercial Vehicles and Desiree Greyling Iveco.
About our partners

Please take a look at the company names above and please will you give each of them a bow. It is these companies which have partnered with FleetWatch on its Brake & Tyre Watch programme committing time, money and expertise to enable the programme to exist. From the truck manufacturers’ side, the Namibian event was supported by Iveco. For each event, we have a different truck manufacturer on board all of whom participate gladly in the interests of raising standards and improving South Africa’s dismal road safety record. Wabco was our very first partner back in 2006 when we conducted the first training exercise at City Deep. If I recall correctly, we had about 15 cops on that event. We now average between 70 and 80 cops per event. As a matter of interest, on that first event, we tested 22 trucks and failed 21 of them. What an eye-opener it was. Bridgestone joined us soon after and as we went along, other like-minded partners came on board. Our latest partner is Orafol, a world leading supplier of reflective materials whom we warmly welcome. In all, it’s a dynamic team of passionate people whose prime purpose is to make a difference. For this – plus a whole lot more - we salute you and pay tribute to you all – world class companies making a tangible difference.