



Shepherd Distribution Services - 'Improving safety through FORS gold'

Based in Sheffield our business offers specialist group-age services to the metals and engineering sectors along with palletised distribution through our Palletline member network.

Laurence Abel is Managing Director at Shepherd Distribution and says that as a business "Shepherds" take pride in the way they approach their work, especially in ensuring they adopt a safe working environment in which its employees, particularly those involved in transport operations, carry out their duties in a professional manner whilst taking account of internal and external factors including road driving risk.

As a specialist operator based in the heart of the steel industry of Sheffield; some of its customer base manufacture product for use in the construction industry. Shepherds carry out deliveries into London and became FORS bronze approved back in 2012 after a thorough on site audit which was passed first time.



FORS has developed over the years; especially the training aspects and these have been extremely beneficial to the business. All drivers have taken part in a series of cycle safety training and Van Smart E-Learning; as well as the Safe Urban Driving which is part of Shepherds on-going CPC module.

We gained FORS silver in 2014 and the prestigious Gold accreditation in 2015.

As an accredited FORS company we compile literature for our customer base; we ensure our suppliers are aware of all the requirements of FORS when we are purchasing fleet; meaning equipment meets the specification from day one thus removing the need to carry out any retro fits. FORS is promoted on company literature such as brochures; our website and safety presentations.

Laurence Abel Managing Director reiterates the message that "Our FORS membership has assisted us to develop; implement and maintain a system of people development"

The training tools are not just for drivers but can be used in all aspects of the business including office based personnel.

Through eLearning and the practical on-cycle Safe Urban Driving module our staff have seen major benefits by recognising the issues posed to vulnerable road user safety by large goods vehicles.



We have teamed up with FORs approved assessors/companies to help deliver this (for example Lorry driver induction training by Crossrail and Safe Urban driving by Fleet Source and Driver Skills Training).

During 2018 Shepherds made significant updates to its Health & Safety manual and staff handbooks; and incorporated a number of FORS lead initiatives.

We now have two members of the Management team who are FORS practitioners; our Head of Compliance Mark Makings and also our senior driving assessor Paul Moorhouse.

Mark became a FORS practitioner in 2017 and Paul during summer 2018.

Paul described the workshops as "extremely beneficial and practical"

The practitioner's workshops cover a host of important topics; some of which Paul has been able to dovetail into his day to day activities.

Performance improvements are evident and there is greater emphasis on root cause analysis and corrective actions through awareness and education. The table below demonstrates improvements in two key areas; vehicle damage & sickness/absence levels.

The increased training (E-Learning & practical) has resulted in far less vehicle incidents; if a driver has an incident they are subject to a 'incident' refresher training day and a report is published and reviewed by senior management as well as any correct plans for the driver.

Workplace morale is also very positive with people taking pride in their work; this is reflected in low levels on absence across the whole business.

	Vehicle damage % (Number of incidents into vehicle days)	Site absence levels % (Sick/absence as a %)
Jan-Dec 2015	0.47%	1.62%
Jan-Dec 2016	0.31%	1.45%
Jan-Dec 2017	0.22%	1.29%
Jan-Dec 2018	0.17%	1.18%
Percentage improvement	*64% improvement since 2015	*27% improvement since 2015

* Significant improvements made with increased headcount in the business year on year.



It's now 4 years since we gained the prestigious gold accreditation. Our driver academy is going from strength to strength as we now have a constant feed of potential new drivers who can be inducted in the 'Shepherds & FORS way'. Some of the new recruits join the business in a warehouse capacity and are fully trained in load safety; shunt operations and so forth before embarking on their Cat C and C+E licence and in-house mentoring; others join as drivers but go through our rigorous in-house training to ensure they meet all the necessary requirements; the use of agency has almost been eliminated.

The last four years has seen the FORS standard continually improve and develop and it now encompasses the likes of WRRR (work related road risks) and CLOCS (the construction logistics and community safety program) within the FORS spectrum. This has proved extremely beneficial as it has put everything under one umbrella and removed some of the confusion.

2019 will see us continue to develop the academy and also focus on many other initiatives such as the Direct Vision standard; working with key suppliers on vehicles and FLT's to further improve our Eco aspects.

Managing Director Laurence Abel (pictured above) is proud to be a FORS gold accredited member and believes that it demonstrates to customers; suppliers; vulnerable road users and the public alike Shepherds commitment to people safety.

For more - visit us at

www.shepherd-distribution.co.uk

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