

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the fourth edition of Top Marks, the annual guide to the road marking industry produced by the Road Safety Markings Association.

With a slightly different format to previous years Top Marks continues to provide contractors and clients with up to date relevant information on the issues that impact on road markings and road safety. This year Top Marks is looking at the issues that RSMA is promoting in partnership with local authorities, local communities and government agencies.

Road markings are increasingly acknowledged as the primary road safety mechanism on our roads and combined with their cost effectiveness they have a lead role in reducing the casualty totals. Top Marks articles on a diverse range of subjects from operative competency and safe working practices through marking maintenance for clients to the White Lines Save Lives Campaign show all aspects of the part the humble road marking can play in reducing accidents.

WHO'S WHO AND WHAT'S WHAT AT THE RSMA

In the year 2001, RSMA celebrated its 25th year of representing the UK road marking industry and also celebrated its most successful year to date.

Now in 2002, in terms of operation and industry support, it is now the biggest specialist trade body in the Highway sector, with a team of professional staff offering a unique range of services and representation to road marking companies UK wide.

In addition to National Director George Lee and Administrator Joyce Bury who have formed the core RSMA team for a number of years, the Association also employs, full time specialist in Training & Development Co-ordinator, Steve Coffey and are currently recruiting for the vacant Marketing & Industry Development Officer post.

Over and above this full time team the Association also fields the largest group of NVQ Assessors for the road building NVQ in the country, along with the services of specialist training companies that deliver a wide range of training requirements through the RSMA Training Brokerage.

This range of services available to members extends beyond training into specialist industry publications, representation to individual client authorities and collectively to local government bodies as well as to the Highways Agency and the Department for Transport. The Association is also active at a European level, contributing to the development of new standards with technical and standard making bodies across the EU as well as maintaining contact with a number of MEPs.

The coming year will present new challenges to the Association, with an active role in the on going implementation of CSCS cards in the road marking sector, trail blazing for the specialist highways industries; the revision of basic training requirements for road marking operatives, the publication of the new government regulations and the related amendments they will bring to RSMA publications and last but not least the largest and most ambitious Annual Conference to date, addressing the vast range of issues impacting upon the sector, its contractors and its clients.

However the Association relishes the challenge and by the fact that it has grown its contracting membership to record levels in recent years reflects that it must be doing something right!

ROAD MARKING AND CSCS

Road Marking and CSCS- Operative safety and output quality

For many years now the Road Safety Markings Association has worked in partnership with bodies such as CSS and the Highways Agency in the development of Quality Assurance in the road-marking sector.

This initiative, which has been part of a wider ranging activity to develop Sector Schemes that relate ISO standards to specialist sectors, has been largely successful in improving the quality of workmanship across the markings sector.

At the core of these schemes has been a rigorous qualification requirement for road marking operatives that historically required the completion of the Certified Operatives Training Scheme (COTS) and the attainment of the COTS Card as evidence of training. More recently the RSMA Competency card based on NVQ Qualification also became common in the industry.

CSCS and a change in requirement

With the full development of the Construction Skills Certification Scheme and the decision by the Highways Agency to throw their weight behind the Main Contractors Group targets of a 100% CSCS qualified workforce, the qualification structure in the road marking sector is now going through significant changes.

Despite initial reservations, the road-marking sector is now acting as the trailblazer for the specialist highways trades with the implementation of CSCS requirements across the industry and the conversion of all operatives' qualifications to CSCS and NVQ standards.

Jack Coupe, Chairman of RSMA explains,

“We took the decision that the MCG and CSCS requirements were not going to go away and felt that it was more important to be in a position to influence our own destiny than acquiesce at a later date, therefore we have been involved in detailed discussions with CSCS”

The outcome of these discussions has been wide ranging and has had an additional influence across the highways sector. In summary the decisions taken mean that the CSCS Card would replace the RSMA Competency Card, that the basic road marking qualification would become the Level 2 Pavement Marking with a knock on effect in the Sector Scheme Document for Road Markings that will mean the withdrawal of the COTS Qualification as a valid qualification under the scheme.

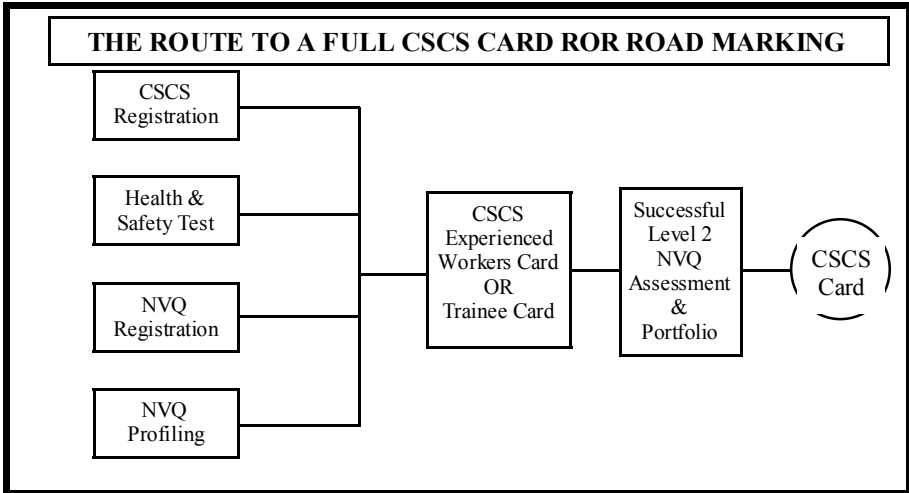
In essence this will mean that under the Sector Scheme requirements, from 2003, an operative will be required to hold a CSCS Card, with the old COTS Card no longer being valid. This will of course impact initially on Highways Agency work, whilst an effort has been made to lengthen the transition period in local authority contracts by an agreement to delay withdrawal of the COTS Qualification from the Standard Specification Document (StanSpec) until 2005.

The CSCS scheme will also see other changes with operatives being required to sit (and pass) the CSCS Health & Safety Touch Screen test before any CSCS Card can be issued and whilst this will initially be the general Health & Safety Test a Highways specific test is now being developed with the intention that it will be available sometime in 2003.

Qualifying for a CSCS Card

Attainment of a CSCS card is relatively straightforward and reflects the different stages of qualification that an Operative may have attained. Cards will be available for trainees and for experienced workers as stepping-stones to the full qualification CSCS Card that comes with obtaining

the NVQ Level 2 Qualification. Under the CSCS system operatives will have up to three years following registration to obtain their full qualification.



Competency versus Training

The requirement for NVQ Qualifications places the competency of the operative in undertaking their role over that of completing a basic training course in a move that is designed to strengthen the role of health & safety and quality in Operatives qualifications. Notwithstanding this, the absolute requirement for training in the fundamentals of the role and the health & safety issues related to it has provided fresh impetus for the restructuring of Operatives basic training in road marking.

Working in partnership with the Local Government Employers Organisation, CSS, training providers and other trade associations, the RSMA has taken the role of lead partner in a fundamental revision of the basic training scheme for road marking operatives to produce a regime that will support companies and operatives in achieving NVQ Qualifications.

It is anticipated that a fully revised training manual and a revised register of trainers will be available late in 2002, providing a complete package of basic training for road marking operatives, a package that will in turn feed into the CSCS/NVQ process by ensuring that both new and experienced operatives can access relevant and up to date training.

By updating the manual it is hoped that companies will be able to ensure that the basic and health & safety training required to keep operatives safe in an otherwise hazardous environment will be delivered industry wide. Additionally the new manual will also reflect the core competencies highlighted in the NVQ and therefore should assist much more closely in preparing the operative for the NVQ Assessment process that will follow.

ROAD MARKING ROUND UP

BROKERAGE BREAKS THROUGH

The RSMA Training Brokerage is celebrating a record year with the service now being accessed by over 50% of contracting members. The Brokerage, which sources training at reduced rates for members from a nationwide register of trainers, is now entering its third year of adding value for members. RSMA Training & Development Co-ordinator, Steve Coffey responsible for the project commented, "The scheme is now saving participating members significant sums through the discounts RSMA has negotiated on their behalf and we will be expanding further the training sourced through the Brokerage."

CERTIFIED OPERATIVES REGISTER

RSMA have recently taken on the management the Certified Operatives Registration Scheme on behalf of the Local Government Management Board. The scheme, which in its guise as an ID card will be wound down as CSCS Cards take over, will continue as a training scheme developed as a partnership between industry and client. It is anticipated that the operative register will stay 'live' until 2005, after which only the Trainers Register and basic training scheme will be active.

STANSPEC 2003

140 clients nationwide now use StanSpec, the RSMA/RMF Standard Specification Document as work goes on to produce the new 2003 edition. Much of the effort is being expended in producing the long awaited electronic edition including Excel Spreadsheets. Not only will an electronic edition simplify the tendering process for all involved it will also help council officers meet e-government requirements. Expected by the end of 2002, Electronic StanSpec will be available under licence from RSMA.

ROAD TRIALS

RSMA is now working actively with French counterparts in shaping the road marking road trials of tomorrow. Plans are now being made for comparison work to be undertaken between UK and French methods of data collection to define the best possible system to identify traffic flows over road trialled lines. The work is taking place under the auspices of the newly formed European Road Trial Users Group.

SHOW SOME TOLERANCE

Discussions are taking place between RSMA and the Highways Agency to introduce a greater dimensional tolerance into the laying of lane lines on motorways and dual carriageways. The existing tolerances are narrower than a piece of guide rope and have been causing problems for contractors and site engineers alike.

HIGHWAYS HEALTH & SAFETY

A new CSCS Health & Safety Test that will include questions directly related to highways issues is to be developed following pressure from RSMA and other trade bodies. Welcoming the development which will take a year to develop and implement, George Lee, RSMA National Director said, "It is unfortunate the highways specific test is not available from the start of CSCS Registrations for road markers, however, it is something that will be of increasing value in coming years"

85% AND RISING

Did you know that RSMA members lay 85% of all the road markings applied annually in the UK? With contracting membership rising at a steady rate this figure is expected to reach 90% by 2005, making RSMA one of the most representative trade associations in the country.

rsma.org.uk

The new RSMA web site is up and running, providing a wide range of information and detail for members and non-members. It is hoped that the site will form another avenue for information on road markings and discussion industry wide, why not visit us at rsma.org.uk

PUBLICATIONS ON CD-ROM

Work is underway to make all RSMA publications available on CD-Rom by the early 2003. It is anticipated that existing publications such as Safety Code of Practice will soon only be available in this format, with purchasers licensed to reproduce the document from disc. The revised Update your Road Markings scheduled for publication after the new TSRGD and Chapter 5 are issued (target date March 2003) will also be available only as an electronic document, sold under a licence by RSMA. New publications such as the Maintenance and Monitoring Best Practice guide due shortly will be available in paper and electronic editions.

ROAD MARKING FORUM SEEKS NEW MEMBERS

The Road Marking Forum (RMF) the Specifiers members section of RSMA is actively looking for new members as it seeks to consolidate the partnership approach to activities such as drawing up StanSpec, developing quality and building a better understanding of safety requirements between client and industry. Open to local authority specifiers and consultancies, please contact RSMA Offices on 0161 763 7711 or fill in the fax back, if you would like additional information on joining.

WHITE LINES SAVE LIVES

A new initiative directed at local authorities and community groups launched by RSMA early in 2002 is beginning to cause ripples amongst some Councils. The White Lines Save Lives Campaign was designed to focus attention on the link between road safety, accident reduction and adequate white lining.

RSMA National Director, George Lee outlined the campaign, “ We circulated over 2 000 post cards to local authorities, MPs, National and Local media outlets highlighting that lives could be saved by making sure road markings were adequate”

The campaign was designed to reinforce the more formal message delivered by both the 2001 Up to the Mark Report into road marking performance on UK roads and the detailed Best Value Report first published by RSMA and ARTSM in 2000.

“We wanted to alert both decision makers and road users to the importance of having good markings if accident figures are to be reduced. As a direct response we have had local authorities, community groups and individuals on the phone seeking advice and information. As a result some pro-active local authorities have been supplied with guidance and more recently community groups have being advised on how to ‘persuade’ their local authorities to address the issue of failing or exhausted road markings”

A more detailed analysis of the outputs of the campaign will be compiled later in the year, with a database of local authorities, areas and roads where the markings are failing being compiled from public feedback.

Local Authorities responsible for the roads reported by the public and especially those with a large number of roads logged on the failing markings database, will be contacted by RSMA and asked whether they need any assistance in specifying their markings and/or what action will be taken to address the issues raised.

A White Lines Saves Lives email address and a telephone hotline to report failing markings were established following the circulation of the post card and press stories and both these have been busy with members of the public reporting problems to the RSMA.

George Lee concluded

“The new road marking standards are directed at ‘road users’ and therefore we felt it is appropriate that the road user, the ultimate customer of both client and contractor should have the chance to pass comment on the performance of road markings and play their part in ensuring those markings are of the highest possible standard – we have been delighted by the response from members of the public and with the positive way that many local authorities have responded to the initiative.

The fact is that White Lines Save Lives and we all need to work together to enhance road safety, this campaign has engaged public, industry and local authorities in a unique and constructive way”

WHO’S WATCHING WHO? – Monitoring road markings – a trivial pursuit?

The issue of the monitoring of road markings is likely to become one of the most important and contentious issues in the sector over the coming years.

In an environment of on going change, whether in specifications to accommodate performance standards and materials, a Best Value regime that requires local authorities to challenge their service standards and not forgetting the litigation culture that appears to pervade the highways environment these days and you have a situation with a great many pressure points.

Yet there are question marks over whether local authorities and for that matter road marking contractors have yet to feel the full impact of these factors.

Recent research by RSMA into local authority monitoring practice has raised a number of issues that will need addressing in the short term regarding how they evaluate the performance of markings. Initial analysis of the responses to the RSMA Client and Consultants Questionnaire issued in June of 2002 indicates that monitoring of markings is informal, inconsistent and unscientific.

Of those responding to the survey at the time of writing (25% of those initially contacted), responses to the questions on monitoring made interesting reading and are shown below:

Do you inspect road markings?

Yes	95%
No	5%

Of those inspecting road markings,

100%	Inspect visually during daylight
27%	Inspect visually during darkness
2%	Use mobile measuring equipment
8%	Use static equipment
40%	Inspect on application
54%	Inspect during maintenance period
77%	Inspect to identify replacement requirements
31%	Inspect at set intervals
4%	Inspect as a result of accidents/complaints

These results, albeit provisional, identify worrying trends in that the prevalence of visual inspection during daylight does not allow for accurate measurement of factors such as skid resistance and most importantly retro-reflectivity, whilst the bare majority of clients (54%) undertake any kind of maintenance period monitoring leaves nearly 50% of marking activity unmonitored for its performance against contract. These factors combined with the relatively low take up of the use of formal monitoring equipment, suggests an informal and unreliable regime that may be exposing clients to litigation and/or non-conformity risks.

The combination of these figures in addition to the increasing number of calls received by RSMA from members and client bodies has led to the establishment of a joint RSMA/Road Marking Forum Working Party to investigate the issues surrounding monitoring with the intention that a brief Best Practice Guide can be produced to provide guidance on how monitoring should be undertaken, thereby ensuring that the correct actions are initiated to maximise performance outputs and benefits from road markings.

It is hoped that some form of consultation on a draft document can be undertaken with the broad cross section of clients and industry practitioners in attendance at the RSMA Annual Conference – Putting Safety on The Road – to be held on 14th November at the Hanover International Hotel in Daventry.

PUTTING SAFETY ON THE ROAD

*With in excess of 3 000 people killed annually on UK roads – it is time that priority turned to **PUTTING SAFETY ON THE ROAD**, argues George Lee, RSMA National Director. A priority that needs to acknowledge the role that improved markings, improved material standards and improved client practice can have in delivering reduced casualties and injuries.*

“Road Safety is **the** Transport Agenda for tomorrow” was the bold statement made at a recent meeting of the RSMA.

Against a backdrop of congestion charging, sustainable transport initiatives, public private sector partnership and the ever-evolving situation on our national rail network one could have been forgiven for thinking that the comment was wide of the mark. Yet on further consideration of the reality on Britain’s roads, it is clear that the speaker was right and road safety is **the** agenda issue and furthermore it deserves to be.

In 2001 over 3 000 people died on UK roads, to place that in context it is more than died in the September 11th outrage in New York and it is the equivalent of over 20 Ladbroke Grove rail crashes – this is not to minimise or denigrate the memory of these events but merely to place in context the enormity of the issue that we are dealing with.

The low profile that this number of deaths attracts in our national media is astonishing and whilst we are all familiar with local campaigns on specific accident black spots run in our local media, the overall consciousness of the issue remains low. Successive Governments have tried to place casualty reduction on the agenda, however, with the caution of one that will be blamed if targets are not met, this action has often been tentative in the extreme, lacking co-ordination and originality, concentrating solely on driver malpractice and not adequately addressing infrastructure issues.

There are many actions that could be taken to reduce the casualty rate, and in a brief article too many to discuss or raise, however, in the context of road markings, the road markings industry and its clients, I believe there is a significant contribution that can be made to making our roads safer.

There is a commonly held view that road markings reduce the risk and frequency of accidents, statistics collected by TRL and analysed/published by RSMA¹ prove this view to be a fact, especially in the context of local safety schemes, specifically designed to address high risk areas. Building on these facts a number of engineers have developed innovative solutions to address traffic flow and accident problems and minimise or reduce risks and have perhaps started to scratch the surface of what could be achieved by placing marking policy near the top of the accident (and consequently casualty) reduction agenda.

Over the last few years, little has stood still in the world of road markings, or perhaps more correctly little should have stood still – old input standards have gone and we have been presented with a range of measurable, end performance driven standards that have their focus on the end user or as they should be known the road user.

This represents a massive cultural change and I would suggest a massive opportunity to utilise road markings to their fullest in reducing the accident rate, but only if the scope of the opportunity is understood and grasped.

The recent RSMA Survey into road marking client practice raised a number of significant issues with over a third of all specifiers utilising out dated, withdrawn and redundant standards and a further 10% indicating a lack of knowledge of the existence of the new standards. The result of this is a failure of over 40% of specifiers to achieve the optimal safety potential from road markings in even the most basic of circumstances. Beyond this are the opportunities for specifying wet night performance or other enhanced products that can play an even more active role in saving lives- opportunities that are not being grasped or even identified.

The potential afforded by a range of standards that offer a flexible range of outputs is immense and there is a clear indication of the need to advise and guide specifiers on what is available and how to use them to them to best advantage.

The same survey also looked at issues of monitoring, an issue discussed in more detail elsewhere in Top Marks, however, it highlights the lack of scientific or objective monitoring (monitoring being predominately visual and in daylight) that take place in respect to road markings meaning that once again opportunities to underwrite road safety are being frittered by the low priority given, primarily by local authorities, to road marking policy.

The premise that enhanced road markings enhance road safety and that performance based standards will similarly improve road safety is not a radical one, however, it brings with it a number of issues that need action, issues that are both practical and policy focussed.

For instance there are issues of understanding amongst specifiers, not just the understanding that new standards are available and the range of possible outputs they offer and issues of how to accurately specify in order to optimise possible safety improvements, but also how effective, subjective monitoring can reduce accidents or identify where risk areas may be developing,

At a policy level there is a need to identify the commitment of policy makers to seeing infrastructure issues such as road marking as key to help central and local government hit casualty reduction figures and to help drivers avoid hitting anything.

These are issues that can be complex and will only form a part of the overall jigsaw of reducing death on our roads; they are however, issues that need to be explored further and with them the opportunity to develop low cost solutions with high added value in terms of accident reduction.

They are issues that need to be discussed and provide potential for all in the road-marking sector from largest specifier to smallest contractor to make an impact on the horrendous fatality level on our roads.

George Lee's article on PUTTING SAFETY ON THE ROAD is the opening commentary for the RSMA Annual Conference for 2002, titled PUTTING SAFETY ON THE ROAD and scheduled to be held on November 14th 2002 in Daventry.

The Conference is designed to move forward the debate from previous RSMA Conferences regarding new standards and specifications and the performance of road markings and to look at the 'What and the How' of the difference road markings can make in terms of road safety.

The Conference will place the role of road markings and performance standards fully into the context of reducing death and accidents on our roads, through a series of key addresses in plenary and a range of smaller specialist presentations to groups of delegates.

Plenary presentations will focus on:

Looking at the policy framework surrounding these issues:

John Smart, Senior Road Safety Engineer at the Highways Agency will outline how the nettle of accident reduction will be grasped in network management terms and the importance of Road Safety in the Government's agenda for transport.

Bert Morris, AA Motoring Policy Manager, will report on the latest EuroRap research into the performance of UK roads. This research has already begun to identify the most dangerous roads in the UK and is now working to identify road audit techniques to help further assess and address risk.

RSMA will report on the findings of the 2002 Ecodyne Survey of road markings, following on from the controversial 2001 survey this will identify whether the quality of markings on the UK network has improved over the last 12 months and where the poorest maintained markings are to be found.

The plenary sessions will be complemented by a series of specialist presentations or 'mini seminars', which delegates can pre-select; choosing the seminars of most interest to them. Delegates can attend 4 seminars from the following:

- Audit Commission presentation that will help identify how local authority performance indicators can be used to enhance road safety and how new indicators can be developed and drawn up at a local level.
- Local Authority Case Study in the practicalities of monitoring maintenance.
- Local Authority Case Studies in Reducing Accidents. 2 case studies looking at practical accident reduction schemes using road markings and the significant numbers of accidents reduced.
- Client Practice makes perfect? - Results of RSMA Survey into clients approach to specifying and monitoring markings along with discussion on developing best practice in road markings.
- StanSpec 2003 – Presentation on latest revisions to the specification now used by over a third of road marking specifiers. Major revisions to pricing schedules and health & safety requirements along with the unveiling of the new electronic format and a final consultation on content for the 2003 document, will form the basis of this presentation.
- COST 331 Workshop – Looking in context at the impact of improved retro-reflectivity
- Measuring safety on the road – Presented by the joint client/industry Markings Monitoring Group, this session will provide practical, hands on guidance on methods of monitoring and the use of monitoring equipment, retro-reflectometers etc. (This session will be held outside)
- Qualifying the workforce – A session on the new arrangements for basic training and competency qualifications for road marking operatives
- Case Study into Researching Road Safety – A brief overview on the where and the how of collecting data on road safety, to help identify those areas that need most action.
- Where to with road marking materials. A session aimed at identifying future developments in performance of road markings and identifying what performance will be required and what may be available – discussion and opinion.