

# Talking of Grading...



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## Making the Grade

In recent times we have been busy recruiting **New Graded Companies / Members** into our midst, which augers well for the stability of the **Association**. This demonstrates how these **New** and **Very Welcomed Members** want to connect themselves with our established aims and ambitions.

The basis of the **Grading Process** has changed little over the many years that it has been in place but significantly there are no longer any 'one' or 'two' **Star Organisations**.

This is largely due to the fact that many of the basic benchmarks, which were originally enshrined in the **Grading Criteria**, are now required for compliance of the **1998 Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act** as well as the **1976 Miscellaneous Provisions Act**. This has resulted in the minimum status almost automatically now being '**3 STAR**', which is evident in the **Member's Listings** in the centre pages of this magazine and also on our website.

However, one of the things that has rather surprised me is the *lack of existence* in some companies of **Driver** and/or **Staff Manuals** as well as **Staff** and **Driver Training** records. Whilst many companies send their people on training and learning initiatives when they are embarking on say, a new computerised booking system, they fail to keep any documented evidence of such activities.

Some of the current sections in the **Grading Report** (under administration) relate specifically to **Staff** and **Driver Training** as well as **Documented Operating Procedures**.

*Many companies do have extensive records* in all of the above areas, which are updated as personnel progress towards achieving higher skill sets. As a consequence these companies generally fall easily into the **4** and **5 Star** status categories

More and more companies are embarking on **NVQ Qualifications** for both their **Staff** and **Drivers** and whilst successful candidates will be rewarded with the appropriate **Certification** upon completion of the programmes, I have encountered instances where no corresponding evidential records are being maintained by the company.

Obtaining a **5 STAR Grading** is not easy and is seldom achieved without there being in place the necessary documentation relating to the requirements of such records. Companies with an **ISO Accreditation** will readily identify with the need to have in place such records as they may be related to their day to day activities.



You do not have to be ISO Accredited, providing you can demonstrate that you are following similar recording techniques and documented procedures, however the formal accreditation with its subsequent auditing and maintenance is often best practice.

The main purpose behind this article is to try and encourage more **Graded Members** to establish **Documented Operating Procedures** and **Staff** and **Driver Records** and to this end there is raft of information available on the Internet, which can be readily and freely down loaded.

Obviously each individual company will have some specific requirements compatible with the nature of their own activities.

A general **Driver's Manual** for example can comprise the basic denominational criteria with perhaps a section or sections added to reflect the company's finite activities, which might include information dealing with **Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety** and **Duty of Care** for example.

It may be worthwhile asking both your **Solicitor** and/or **Accountant** to give any such publications the 'once over' before going to print.

So, in concluding I hope that more and more of you will take on board the need to create an audit trail for your **Staff** and **Driver Training** activities to enhance your **Documented Operating Procedures** profile.

Elsewhere in this edition you will see details about **ISO 14000** and other '**environmental related**' articles. It is very likely that at the next **Grading Review** we will cover the need to be '**Environmentally Compliant**' and '**Responsible**' in today's world within the **Grading Assessment** and I will cover this in a future edition of **Talking of Grading**.

