

Talking of Grading...



by **GEOFF WRIGHT**
(CHIEF GRADING OFFICER)

All change please! ...familiar words

When the **LPHCA Grading System** was first introduced it started life as just one sheet of paper with just a number of fairly academic questions to determine whether membership requirements were being met.

Following a meeting with the then **London Transport Minister Steven Norris** it was developed further to see which **category** a **Member Company** would fall into and what their **Star Rating** should be.

The 'one sheet of paper' system, (which although initially successful as a starting point), was soon replaced as it did not embrace enough of the **Private Hire Industry's** activities.

So, it was back to the drawing board and after many hours of work, we identified the fundamental needs for a comprehensive **Grading Report**, which was then developed into what we now use today. This was designed against the criteria set out in a comprehensive "**Grading Guide**", which we issued to applying **Operators** and interested parties like **Work Suppliers** and **Local Authorities**.

Grading Reports are still produced and saved in **Lotus®WordPro®** format, which has served our needs well. These reports have been held electronically by us since **2000** and we were probably **ahead of our time environmentally**.

As we are often asked to supply copy reports electronically by email we have usually needed to convert them to Microsoft® Word® format prior to sending them out, which in fairness can be done from Lotus®WordPro®.

It should be remembered that when the **Grading Assessment** system was initially introduced in **1993**. It was quite revolutionary in so far as there was no other **Industry Standard** either in **London**, or in fact **nationally** for that matter, for determining how good or bad **Operators** were in their **administration and management activities**, which of course reflects **the level of service provided**.

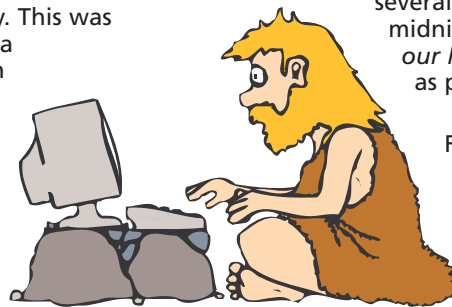
The present **Grading System** has successfully stood the test of time but after careful consideration we have decided that things now have to change in the way we manage the vast amounts of useful information that we hold. We have therefore decided to produce **all future Grading Reports** in **Microsoft® Word®** format which is more helpful to **Members** and others.

Whilst doing the transition we have changed the front page of the reports so that the historical information is more comprehensive and easier for us to handle at **Head Office**. **All Member Companies** who are scheduled to be visited from **February 2010** onwards will be able to receive their report on request in **Microsoft® Word®** format and/or in **Adobe® Acrobat®** technology **PDF (Portable Document Format)**, which will enable **environmentally friendly** electronic transmission of reports, etc.



We had hoped that we would start **2010** with this newly designed format but the inevitable teething problems of a re-design meant we went live in **February**. We are however *retrospectively converting reports* from the start of **2010** so all the new decade's reports are more readily available to **Members** and importantly *can be forwarded easily with tender and procurement documents*.

All the changes would be difficult to describe in this article but the resulting new format took many hours and several meetings and after much burning of the midnight oil before it was finally considered to up to *our high standards* and as *environmentally friendly* as possible.



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For the time being we do not intend to alter the present **Categories** format in the **Grading Reports** as in true **LPHCA** tradition we will seek a mandate from the **Membership** to endorse our proposal to bring about a completely new, radical approach on how we undertake the **Grading Assessments**. At **Member's Meetings** this year we will put together our proposals and the thinking behind the next **Grading Report** format and we will hopefully be able to implement an even more comprehensive system sometime early in **2011**.

The principles of such a system will embrace a whole raft of new and additional serials, which have been gathered not only from within the **London** based **Companies** but those **highly valued Members** based elsewhere in the **Country**, to develop what we do **nationally**.

In streamlining the **Grading System** we feel we will offer our **Members** a much more comprehensive **Grading Report**, which will eventually become a stand alone document in its own right. We believe this document will enable **Companies** to improve and develop further outside the basic licensing requirements, to embrace new demands in **health & safety**, **environmentally friendliness** and of **procurement requirements**.

We look forward to presenting and developing our ideas at **LPHCA** meetings throughout this year and at our **AGM** in **October**.

We have also embarked on a regime of tailoring the distribution of **Private Hire News** more effectively. In future every member of staff nominated by a **Graded Company**, will receive a personally addressed copy to ensure they get all the latest news. Previously, not all the key members of staff saw a copy, so they potentially missed out on **important industry information** contained in the magazine.