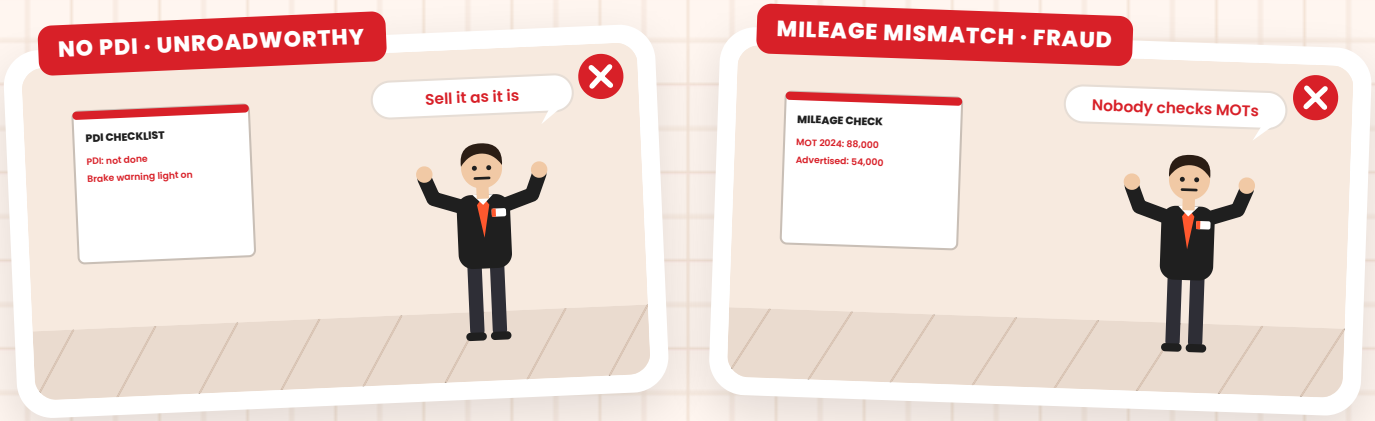
autosmart

Edition 1 · United Kingdom · 2026

• SELLING UNSAFE CARS IS A CRIME Used cars, workshop, tyre bay & MOT centre

Vehicle Sales Standards Compliance Guidebook for Automotive Companies

Roadworthiness, recalls, mileage, history checks, tyres and MOTs: what Trading Standards and DVSA check, **and why selling an unsafe car is a criminal offence.**



Criminal
offence to sell an **unroadworthy vehicle** (RTA s.75).

10 years
maximum prison for **fraud**, including clocking.

Undercover
Trading Standards **test-buy** cars.

6 standards · 18 checkpoints · RTA 1988 · GPSR 2005 · DMCCA · Right way / wrong way · Ideal fix time

Test purchase Officer buys the car → **Inspection** Engineer finds defects → **Feb 2026** Norwich dealer sentenced → **The next customer may be an officer.**

WHY THIS GUIDEBOOK EXISTS

Every used car you sell could be a test purchase.

Trading Standards officers buy cars from dealers and have them inspected. Selling an unroadworthy vehicle is a **criminal offence**, supplying a dangerous product can mean prison, and mileage or history lies are fraud.

This guidebook covers the 6 vehicle standards every used car and workshop team should meet.

WHERE THE RISK SITS

Safety
Pre-sale inspection
VEH-01

Recalls
Cleared before sale
VEH-02

Mileage
MOT history checks
VEH-03

History
Finance, theft, write-off
VEH-04

Tyres
Legal and marked
VEH-05

MOT
Testing standards
VEH-06

WHO ENFORCES IT

Trading Standards
Local councils
Test purchases and prosecutions

DVSA
Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency
MOT scheme and recalls

Police
Fraud and clocking
Criminal investigation

Courts
County court
Customer rejection and compensation

WHO IT'S FOR

Dealer principals & directors
Understand personal criminal liability.

Used car & workshop managers
Make every car safe and honestly described.

Auditors
Check cars the way an officer would.

CRIMINAL COURTS, NOT CIVIL FINES

One unchecked car. A criminal record.

In February 2026 a Norwich dealer was sentenced for selling a **dangerous car** without proper checks. The fine was small, but the conviction, costs and publicity stay with the business and its director.

THE PENALTY LADDER

LEVEL 1
Rejection
Customer returns the car for a refund.

LEVEL 2
Unlimited
Fine for an unroadworthy sale.

LEVEL 3
Prison
Dangerous product supply.

LEVEL 4
10 years
Fraud, including clocking.

REAL CASES FROM US AUTOMOTIVE BUSINESSES

WHO	RESULT	WHAT HAPPENED
Auto Park Norwich Trading Standards · Feb 2026	**£5,700** fine + costs	Dangerous Ford Galaxy and unroadworthy Peugeot 3008; insufficient pre-sale checks.
Test purchases Trading Standards	**Undercover** buys	Officers buy cars and have them inspected by engineers.
MOT centres DVSA	**Cessation** of testing	For serious or repeated failures in testing standards.

SMALL DEALER
£5.7K
Fine and costs, plus a conviction.

CLOCKING
10 years
Maximum prison under the Fraud Act.

AND THEN
Publicity
Convictions are **published by councils**.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

One page per standard. Check every car.

1. **Header**: code, area, owner and the maximum penalty
2. **The law**: which regulator and which regulation
3. **The cost**: fine, what else can happen and a real case
4. **Right / wrong**: illustrated pass and fail, plus how to audit

THE 6 STANDARDS

VEH-01	Pre-Sale Roadworthiness Check ⛓ PRISON	RTA s.75	SEVERE	Unlimited + prison	Immediate	5
VEH-02	Open Recalls Cleared Before Sale ⛓ PRISON	GPSR 2005	SEVERE	Unlimited + prison	Immediate	6
VEH-03	Mileage Verified ⛓ PRISON	DMCCA · Fraud Act	CRITICAL	Unlimited + prison	Immediate	7
VEH-04	History & Write-Off Checks ⛓ PRISON	DMCCA s.226	SEVERE	Unlimited	72 hours	8
VEH-05	Tyres Legal & Correctly Marked ⛓ PRISON	Tyre Regs 1994	SEVERE	Unlimited	24 hours	9
VEH-06	MOT Testing Standards ⛓ PRISON	MOT scheme	SEVERE	Loss of MOT licence	7 days	10

IDEAL FIX TIME · COUNTED FROM AUDIT SUBMISSION

Immediate	Stop now · serious harm or clear breach	3 standards
24 hours	Fix within 1 working day	1 standard
72 hours	Fix within 3 working days	1 standard
7 days	Fix within 1 week · records, notices, training	1 standard

SCORING EACH CHECKPOINT

PASS
Every criterion met at the time of audit, with evidence captured.

FAIL
Any criterion not met at the time of audit. Record what you saw and who owns the fix.

N/A
Only where "Applies when" rules it out. Record why.

Note. Fines in England and Wales for summary offences are unlimited since 2015. Scotland and Northern Ireland differ.

VEH-01 VEHICLE STANDARDS · TRADING STANDARDS · STANDARD 01 OF 06

Pre-Sale Roadworthiness Check

Area **Used cars · Workshop** | Person in charge **Used Car Manager · Workshop Controller** | Regulator **Trading Standards · DVSA**

MAXIMUM PENALTY

Unlimited

fine · magistrates' court

Unsafe products: up to **12 months in prison** · unfair practices: up to 2 years

• SEVERE | ⛓ PRISON RISK

THE LAW

RTA 1988

Road Traffic Act 1988 · **General Product Safety Regulations 2005** · DMCCA 2024 · **Road Traffic Act 1988 s.75** sale of unroadworthy vehicles · GPSR 2005 dangerous products

WHAT WE CHECK

Every used car gets a documented pre-sale inspection (brakes, tyres, steering, lights, structure, warning lights) before it's advertised, and faults are fixed.

CHECKPOINTS IN THE AUDIT

- Q1 Is every used car inspected against a written checklist before sale?
- Q2 Are safety faults fixed before the car is advertised or handed over?
- Q3 Is the signed inspection kept on the deal file?

WHAT NON-COMPLIANCE COSTS YOU

THE FINE

Selling an unroadworthy vehicle (RTA s.75) is a criminal offence with an **unlimited fine** in England and Wales. Supplying a dangerous product carries **unlimited fines and prison**.

BEYOND THE FINE

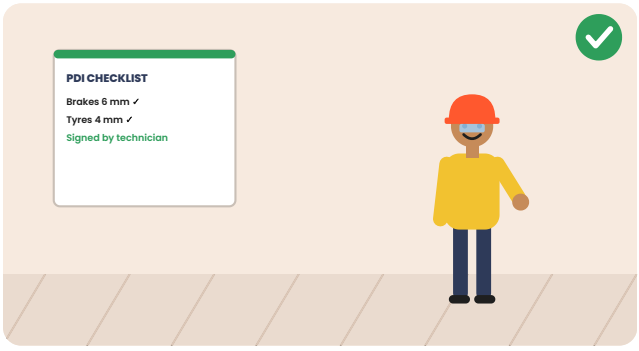
Trading Standards can prosecute directors personally, seize vehicles and publicise convictions. Customers can reject the car and claim compensation.

REAL ENFORCEMENT

£5,700

fine and costs for a Norwich dealer (Feb 2026) who sold a **dangerous Ford Galaxy** without proper pre-sale checks.

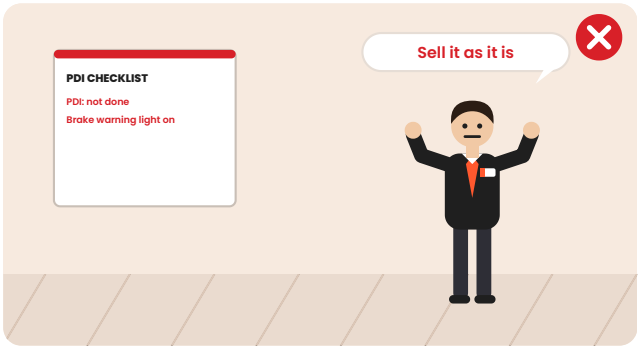
✔ RIGHT WAY



Signed inspection with measurements.

✖ WRONG WAY

CRIMINAL



No inspection, brake warning light on.

PURPOSE

Trading Standards buy cars undercover and have them inspected. A skipped check is the case they're looking for.

FIX IT WITHIN

◷ Immediate

AUDIT CRITERIA · PASS WHEN

- ✓ Written checklist
- ✓ Faults fixed before sale
- ✓ Signed and filed

IDEAL WAY OF AUDITING

1. Sample 10 deal files for PDIs
2. Road-check 2 cars on the forecourt
3. Check warning lights

Evidence: PDI sheets.

WORST CASE Selling an unroadworthy or dangerous car is **criminal**: unlimited fines, and prison for dangerous products.

VEH-02 VEHICLE STANDARDS · TRADING STANDARDS · STANDARD 02 OF 06

Open Recalls Cleared Before Sale

Area **Used cars** | Person in charge **Used Car Manager**

Regulator **Trading Standards · DVSA**

MAXIMUM PENALTY

Unlimited

fine · magistrates' court

Unsafe products: up to **12 months in prison** · unfair practices: up to 2 years

• SEVERE | ⛓ PRISON RISK

THE LAW

RTA 1988

Road Traffic Act 1988 · **General Product Safety Regulations 2005** · DMCCA 2024 · **General Product Safety Regulations 2005** · DVSA recall code of practice

WHAT WE CHECK

Every car is checked for outstanding safety recalls before sale, and recall work is completed (or the customer is clearly told and it's booked in) before handover.

CHECKPOINTS IN THE AUDIT

- Q1 Is every car checked for outstanding safety recalls before advertising?
- Q2 Is recall work completed before handover?
- Q3 Are recall checks recorded on the deal file?

WHAT NON-COMPLIANCE COSTS YOU

THE FINE

Selling an unroadworthy vehicle (RTA s.75) is a criminal offence with an **unlimited fine** in England and Wales. Supplying a dangerous product carries **unlimited fines and prison**.

BEYOND THE FINE

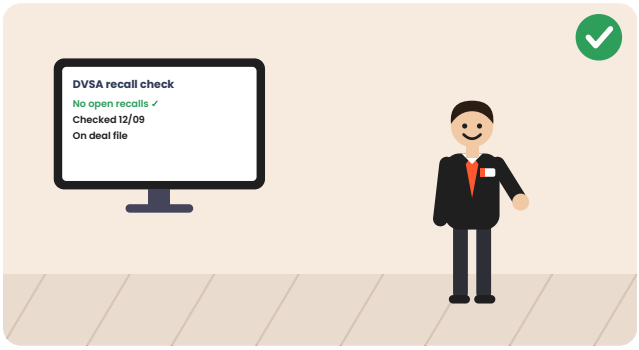
Trading Standards can prosecute directors personally, seize vehicles and publicise convictions. Customers can reject the car and claim compensation.

REAL ENFORCEMENT

Test purchase

Trading Standards officers **buy cars undercover** and have them inspected: several dealers have been prosecuted this way.

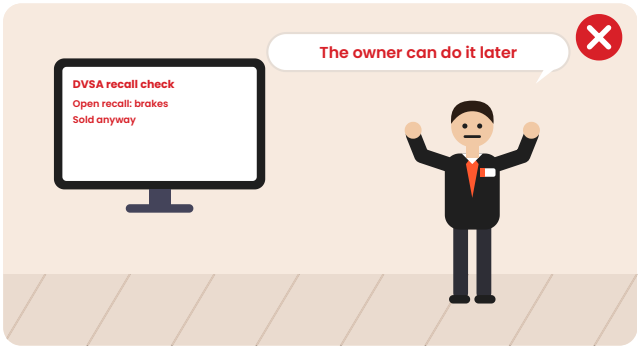
✔ RIGHT WAY



Recall check clear and recorded.

✖ WRONG WAY

CRIMINAL



Sold with an open brake recall.

PURPOSE

An open safety recall is a known danger. Selling without fixing it is hard to defend.

FIX IT WITHIN

◷ Immediate

AUDIT CRITERIA · PASS WHEN

- Recall check per car
- Work completed
- Recorded

IDEAL WAY OF AUDITING

1. Check 10 stock cars on the DVSA service
2. Check deal files

Evidence: Recall checks.

WORST CASE Supplying a car with a known safety defect can be treated as a **dangerous product offence**.

VEH-03 VEHICLE STANDARDS · TRADING STANDARDS · STANDARD 03 OF 06

Mileage Verified

Area **Used cars** | Person in charge **Used Car Manager**

Regulator **Trading Standards · DVSA**

MAXIMUM PENALTY

Unlimited

fine · Fraud Act prosecution

Fraud: up to **10 years in prison**

• CRITICAL | ⛓ PRISON RISK

THE LAW

FRAUD

Road Traffic Act 1988 · **General Product Safety Regulations 2005** · DMCCA 2024 · **DMCCA 2024** misleading actions · **Fraud Act 2006** (mileage tampering)

WHAT WE CHECK

Mileage is checked against MOT history and service records before sale, discrepancies are investigated and disclosed, and mileage is never altered.

CHECKPOINTS IN THE AUDIT

- Q1 Is every car's mileage checked against MOT history?
- Q2 Are discrepancies disclosed to customers in writing?
- Q3 Is mileage correction or alteration forbidden?

WHAT NON-COMPLIANCE COSTS YOU

THE FINE

Selling an unroadworthy vehicle (RTA s.75) is a criminal offence with an **unlimited fine** in England and Wales. Supplying a dangerous product carries **unlimited fines and prison**.

BEYOND THE FINE

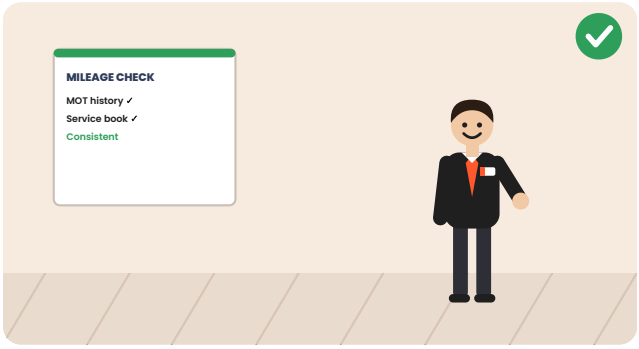
Trading Standards can prosecute directors personally, seize vehicles and publicise convictions. Customers can reject the car and claim compensation.

REAL ENFORCEMENT

Test purchase

Trading Standards officers **buy cars undercover** and have them inspected: several dealers have been prosecuted this way.

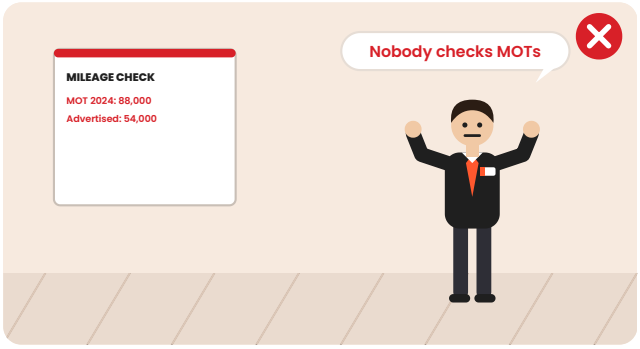
✔ RIGHT WAY



Mileage consistent with MOT history.

✖ WRONG WAY

FRAUD



Advertised 34,000 miles below the last MOT.

PURPOSE

MOT history is public, so any customer or officer can check it in seconds.

FIX IT WITHIN

◷ Immediate

AUDIT CRITERIA · PASS WHEN

- MOT check per car
- Discrepancies disclosed
- No alteration

IDEAL WAY OF AUDITING

1. Check 10 cars online
2. Compare with adverts

Evidence: MOT history checks.

WORST CASE Clocking can be prosecuted as **fraud: up to 10 years in prison**.

VEH-04 VEHICLE STANDARDS · TRADING STANDARDS · STANDARD 04 OF 06

History & Write-Off Checks

Area **Used cars** | Person in charge **Used Car Manager**

Regulator **Trading Standards · DVSA**

MAXIMUM PENALTY

Unlimited

fine · magistrates' court

Unsafe products: up to **12 months in prison** · unfair practices: up to 2 years

• SEVERE | ⛓ PRISON RISK

THE LAW

RTA 1988

Road Traffic Act 1988 · **General Product Safety Regulations 2005** · DMCCA 2024 · **DMCCA 2024** misleading omissions · **Consumer Rights Act 2015**

WHAT WE CHECK

Every car has a history check for outstanding finance, theft and insurance write-off category, and the result is disclosed and filed.

CHECKPOINTS IN THE AUDIT

- Q1 Is a history check done on every car before sale?
- Q2 Are write-off categories (S/N) disclosed in the advert and paperwork?
- Q3 Is outstanding finance cleared before sale?

WHAT NON-COMPLIANCE COSTS YOU

THE FINE

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BEYOND THE FINE

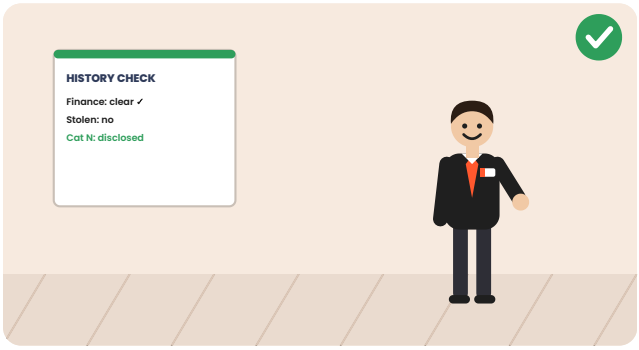
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REAL ENFORCEMENT

Test purchase

Trading Standards officers **buy cars undercover** and have them inspected: several dealers have been prosecuted this way.

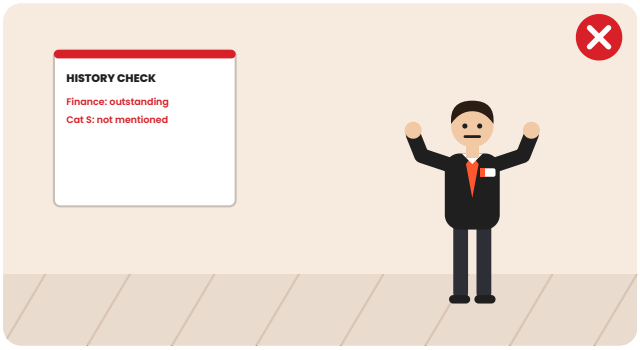
✔ RIGHT WAY



Clear check, Cat N disclosed.

✖ WRONG WAY

UNLIMITED



Outstanding finance, Cat S hidden.

PURPOSE

Finance left on a car means the customer may not own it. A hidden write-off is a misleading omission.

FIX IT WITHIN

◷ 72 hours

AUDIT CRITERIA · PASS WHEN

- Check per car
- Write-off disclosed
- Finance cleared

IDEAL WAY OF AUDITING

1. Sample 10 cars' history checks
2. Compare with adverts

Evidence: History checks.

WORST CASE A hidden write-off leads to a **rejected car, a refund and possible prosecution**.

VEH-05 VEHICLE STANDARDS · TRADING STANDARDS · STANDARD 05 OF 06

Tyres Legal & Correctly Marked

Area **Tyre bay · Used cars** | Person in charge **Workshop Controller**

Regulator **Trading Standards · DVSA**

MAXIMUM PENALTY

Unlimited

fine · magistrates' court

Unsafe products: up to **12 months in prison** · unfair practices: up to 2 years

• SEVERE | PRISON RISK

THE LAW

RTA 1988

Road Traffic Act 1988 · **General Product Safety Regulations 2005** · DMCCA 2024 · **Motor Vehicles (Tyres) (Safety) Regulations 1994** part-worn tyres · Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regs

WHAT WE CHECK

Cars are sold with legal tyres (at least 1.6 mm, no damage). Part-worn tyres sold separately are inspected and marked "PART WORN".

CHECKPOINTS IN THE AUDIT

- Q1 Do all cars have legal, undamaged tyres of the correct type?
- Q2 Are part-worn tyres inspected and permanently marked "PART WORN"?
- Q3 Are tyres over 10 years old never fitted to the front of heavy vehicles?

WHAT NON-COMPLIANCE COSTS YOU

THE FINE

Selling an unroadworthy vehicle (RTA s.75) is a criminal offence with an **unlimited fine** in England and Wales. Supplying a dangerous product carries **unlimited fines and prison**.

BEYOND THE FINE

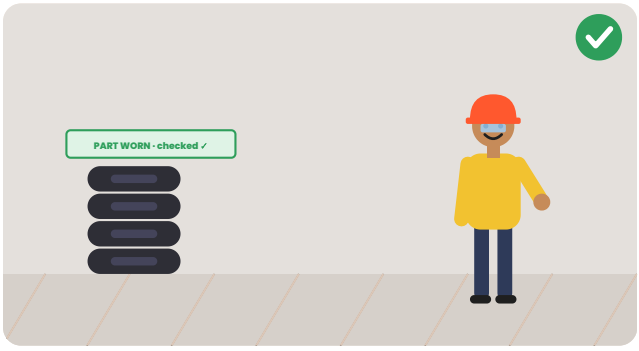
Trading Standards can prosecute directors personally, seize vehicles and publicise convictions. Customers can reject the car and claim compensation.

REAL ENFORCEMENT

Test purchase

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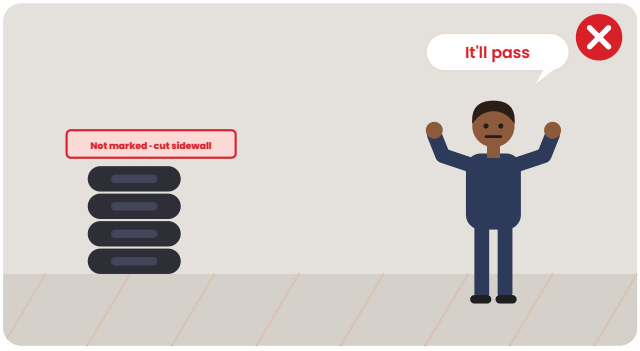
✔ RIGHT WAY



Part-worn tyres inspected and marked.

✖ WRONG WAY

UNLIMITED



Unmarked tyre with a cut sidewall.

PURPOSE

Trading Standards regularly test-buy part-worn tyres, and many fail.

FIX IT WITHIN

24 hours

AUDIT CRITERIA · PASS WHEN

- Legal tread
- No damage
- Part-worn marked
- Inspected

IDEAL WAY OF AUDITING

1. Check tyres on 10 stock cars
2. Check part-worn stock

Evidence: Photos.

WORST CASE Each unsafe or unmarked tyre is a separate **offence**, with unlimited fines.

VEH-06 VEHICLE STANDARDS · TRADING STANDARDS · STANDARD 06 OF 06

MOT Testing Standards

Area **MOT bay** | Person in charge **MOT Manager** | Regulator **Trading Standards · DVSA**

MAXIMUM PENALTY

Cessation

of MOT testing authorisation

Fraudulent MOTs: **criminal prosecution**

• SEVERE | ⛓ PRISON RISK

THE LAW

RTA 1988

Road Traffic Act 1988 · **General Product Safety Regulations 2005** · DMCCA 2024 · **MOT Testing Guide** · DVSA disciplinary framework

WHAT WE CHECK

Where the site tests MOTs, testers are qualified and do annual training and assessment, equipment is calibrated, and tests are done honestly and fully.

Applies when: Sites that are authorised MOT testing stations.

CHECKPOINTS IN THE AUDIT

- Q1 Have all testers completed annual training and assessment?
- Q2 Is test equipment calibrated and in date?
- Q3 Are quality control checks done on testers every month?

WHAT NON-COMPLIANCE COSTS YOU

THE FINE

Selling an unroadworthy vehicle (RTA s.75) is a criminal offence with an **unlimited fine** in England and Wales. Supplying a dangerous product carries **unlimited fines and prison**.

BEYOND THE FINE

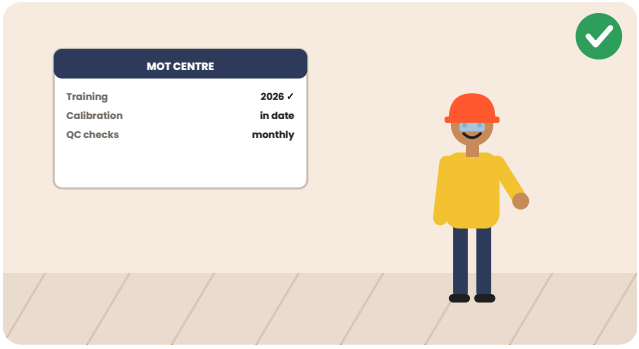
Trading Standards can prosecute directors personally, seize vehicles and publicise convictions. Customers can reject the car and claim compensation.

REAL ENFORCEMENT

Cessation

DVSA can **stop an MOT centre testing** for serious or repeated failures in testing standards.

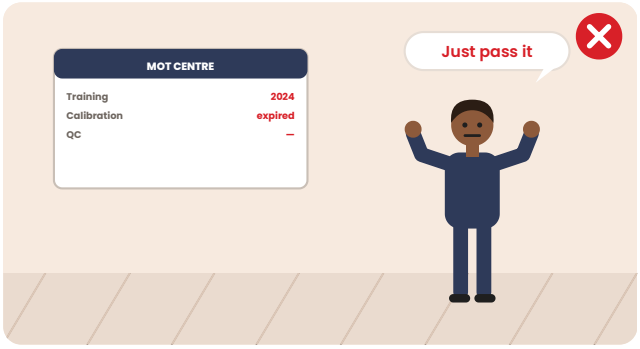
✔ RIGHT WAY



Training, calibration and QC all current.

✖ WRONG WAY

LICENCE



Expired calibration and no QC.

PURPOSE

DVSA can suspend or stop an MOT centre, and fraudulent MOTs are prosecuted.

FIX IT WITHIN

◷ 7 days

AUDIT CRITERIA · PASS WHEN

- Annual training
- Calibration
- Monthly QC
- Honest tests

IDEAL WAY OF AUDITING

1. Check the MOT testing service
2. Check calibration certificates
3. Review QC records

Evidence: Training + calibration + QC.

WORST CASE DVSA can **stop the centre testing**. Fraudulent MOTs can bring **criminal prosecution**.

CHECK THE CAR BEFORE THE OFFICER DOES

Your 30-day vehicle action plan.

Today

- [ ] **VEH-01** Pre-Sale Roadworthiness Check
  Immediate
- [ ] **VEH-02** Open Recalls Cleared Before Sale
  Immediate
- [ ] **VEH-03** Mileage Verified
  Immediate
- [ ] **VEH-05** Tyres Legal & Correctly Marked
  24 hours

This week

- [ ] **VEH-04** History & Write-Off Checks
  72 hours
- [ ] **VEH-06** MOT Testing Standards
  7 days

This month

Re-audit the site in 30 days.

?/6 Count your passes. Every fail is a car that could be a **criminal case**.

SOURCES

- Car Dealer Magazine: rogue dealer fined for selling dangerous vehicle (Feb 2026) · cardealermagazine.co.uk
- Road Traffic Act 1988 s.75; GPSR 2005; Fraud Act 2006; Motor Vehicles (Tyres) (Safety) Regs 1994 · legislation.gov.uk
- DVSA: MOT testing guide and disciplinary framework · gov.uk

Disclaimer. For compliance-audit guidance only; not legal advice. Penalties depend on the offence and court.

AUDIT SIGN-OFF

DEALERSHIP / SITE	AUDITOR	DATE	SCORE __ / 6

BRANCH / DEALER PRINCIPAL SIGNATURE	COMPLIANCE LEAD SIGNATURE