

## Business Insight

Insurance

# Smile, you're on camera

*It is a remarkable fact that although the UK has only 1 per cent of the world's population, it possesses 20 per cent of its CCTV cameras. That's one camera for every 14 people, and if you spend your day in a town or city you could be spotted on camera as many as 300 times a day. Tracey Wheeler, Allianz MID Controller, and Neil Drane, Head of MIIC Operations consider the impact on the motor trade sector.*



The use of CCTV cameras is a key weapon in fighting crime, and this includes tackling the significant problems relating to uninsured driving. Police Forces across the country increasingly rely on Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology to target crime hot spots in our towns and cities and on the highways of the UK to deny criminals the use of the roads. The increasing network of ANPR cameras in mobile units enables the police to identify and detain criminals, including uninsured drivers. Each mobile unit can process 3,000 Vehicle Registration Marks (VRMs) an hour, even if the vehicle is travelling at speeds in excess of 100mph. Each VRM is run against databases such as the DVLA, Motor Insurance Database (MID), the Police National Computer (PNC) and other local intelligence systems.

It is, therefore, no surprise that ANPR is estimated to be around ten times more effective than normal traffic policing methods in detecting uninsured vehicles, primarily because ANPR systems identify suspect vehicles that may not normally attract police attention. In the last

12 months the Police seized 78,000 vehicles in England and Wales but we know this is a conservative estimate as different forces recorded data in different ways. The figure is likely to be as high as 100,000. Early indications are that over 50,000 vehicles may have been seized for no insurance so far in 2007 although this figure has not as yet been ratified by the Police. Removing such an enormous number of uninsured vehicles from our roads is proof the MID is working. Added to this, the Motor Insurers' Bureau (MIB) is currently reporting a reduction of 4 per cent in uninsured claims over the previous year, and a further 4 per cent so far this year. So what's this got to do with motor traders who insure their vehicles?

### The motor trade connection

Motor traders who fail to keep the MID up-to-date will fall into the police uninsured net. The MID is only as accurate as the information it holds and, unwittingly, some dealers are providing new vehicle owners with free insurance and subsequent immunity from police detection by not removing vehicles from the MID as soon as they are sold.

The MIB reports that, potentially, over 360,000 vehicles are on the MID with the wrong VRM, leading motor traders to believe they have fulfilled their legal obligations, but their vehicles are still exposed. Common mistakes on the MID have been made in the use of a 'zero' instead of the letter 'O', use of the numeric 'five' instead of the letter S and use of the numeric 'one' instead of the letter I. Simple errors of this kind can lead to potential vehicle seizure by the Police, wasting the time and resource of the Police, the motorist and businesses as well as an inability to use the Electronic Vehicle Licensing system.

In an effort to provide a means of checking that a vehicle is on MID correctly the MIB has launched a new website facility, which goes live this month: [www.askmid.com](http://www.askmid.com) This website will allow vehicle drivers a unique opportunity to key in the VRM of the vehicle they drive to check it is on MID correctly. It comes recommended by Neil Drane, head of MIIC Operations, who says: 'This easy to use and simple website check could save motor traders a lot of time and money in the long run'.

### Hit list

More alarming is the absence of an insured vehicle from the MID, exposing motor traders to the possible removal of an insured vehicle at the roadside if they are stopped by the Police, disrupting business, disappointing customers, affecting revenue and costing the business at least £105 to retrieve the vehicle from the Police pound plus around £12 a day storage charge (these charges may increase later this year).

But how can this happen when a vehicle is insured? Simple, if the MID has not been updated with details of a vehicle, a MID search by the Police at the roadside will not find a match, and the legal powers granted to the Police to allow them to seize the vehicle if they suspect it may not be insured there and then is, therefore, a real possibility. The Police also use a monthly 'hit list' of suspected uninsured vehicles provided by the MIB, which is loaded onto the ANPR camera systems nationally. An alarm is triggered when a potentially uninsured vehicle from the hit list passes a camera location, causing the vehicle to be stopped by the Police to carry out further roadside checks, which may lead to the vehicle being seized. Dealers who purchase second-hand vehicles and fail to update the MID within four weeks will find themselves on this report.

Accuracy of the MID has never been more important to ensure motor traders avoid fines and disruption to their business.

So make sure your drivers can smile confidently as they pass the cameras – ensure that you have an effective process to capture and submit vehicle data promptly and accurately to the MID.