



The benefits of FORS



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After the announcement of FORS becoming a national scheme in February, *Focus* spoke to Bob Dempsey MILT, Operations Manager South, Wilson James, a Gold Member of FORS since 2014, to discuss the benefits of being FORS accredited.

Established by TfL in 2008, FORS is an extremely successful scheme, but as 65% of accredited operators are now based outside London it has grown beyond TfL's remit. CILT, along with AECOM and Fleet Source, has taken the scheme national and is committed to working within the sector to raise professional standards across the UK.

Discussing this announcement, Bob Dempsey believes the time is right for FORS accreditation to be a national requirement: 'I would love to see more companies gain FORS accreditation; it will make the roads safer across the entire country. It will take a long time, but the benefits it creates on the road, for the fleets and vulnerable road-users will be significant. As an industry, we will be able to encourage companies across the country to operate at a standard that is very high. There is a drive and a desire for this to be achieved.'

Wilson James became a pioneering partner in the early stage of FORS and was one of the first companies to achieve silver accreditation in 2009, gaining re-approval in 2012 and 2013.

SECTOR HIGHLIGHTS



Bob Dempsey says: 'We were involved in the FORS workshops from an early stage and we felt that it was essential to obtain the accreditation as soon as we could and have had no regrets. Our FORS standard proves we are a respectable operator that runs a tight ship and is safety focused. We pride ourselves on having a strong relationship with clients who give us kudos because we do and deliver exactly what we promise: they're getting a safe and secure service from us.'

In order to establish FORS as a national scheme, there is a requirement for it to be self-funded, and details of the pricing structure were announced in February. Despite the introduction of a charge to the scheme, Bob Dempsey is satisfied with the new pricing structure, accepting desire to make FORS's a commercial scheme: 'The new pricing scheme is on the whole pretty reasonable. For us, it works out at about £45 a truck per year, which, when aiming for the very best in safety standards, is a price that is definitely acceptable. As long as the prices do not rise and the specifications are not increased – as they are already incredibly thorough – I can't see many firms being troubled by these changes.'

In July 2014, Wilson James achieved the gold standard of FORS level and Bob Dempsey thinks it was of the utmost importance to achieve. 'A lot of construction sites require this [gold] level. We felt it was best and only right to aspire to and achieve gold standard to benefit us in every step of business. We are delighted to be one of a few construction related companies to have done so. A number of major construction projects have realised the benefits of consolidation, given the severe delivery constraints that their central London sites have.'

Wilson James promotes FORS across its Construction and Aviation Divisions and has been instrumental in assisting various companies with ensuring that vehicles entering their sites are FORS accredited.

Bob Dempsey says: 'We will, whenever possible, choose to use only FORS-accredited suppliers. All of our own vehicles are equipped with significant safety measure to reduce the likelihood of incidents. None of our vehicles is more than a year old and they are all equipped with the latest in safety

and security. By providing our vehicles and drivers with the right tools and training, the London Construction Consolidation Centre can be considered part of the drive to ensure the safety of vulnerable road-users in London and improving the efficiency and cost effectiveness of construction projects.'

FORS members have access to a range of exclusive benefits, including the opportunity to secure business with organisations that specify accreditation standards, improve safety, reduce environmental impact and save money.

'The benefits we have felt have been dramatic in the years we have been a FORS member,' Bob Dempsey says. 'It keeps us on our toes, as we strive to excel with our safety measures. We have seen a significant reduction in fines and charges, with no more than six penalty charge notices a year. Fuel is now being saved by low-emission trucks and we are aware of the routes we are taking to keep us away from congested traffic areas. The FORS audit is so thorough that if all companies completed it, I'm positive fewer accidents would happen.'



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FURTHER INFORMATION

For new operators to the scheme annual registration starts from £65 for a company with one vehicle, plus the cost of an annual audit. Companies with their own internal audit capability can be approved to certify their own depots to the FORS standard.

Further information, website: www.fors-online.org.uk