

## **Autodata working with Trading Standards to keep motorists safe**

- **Specialist vehicle information provided by Autodata enables Trading Standards to unravel motor vehicle disputes and drive up standards**

The alliance between technical information specialist, Autodata, and the Trading Standards Institute was first brought to fruition in 2006. The aim was to combat illegal, and often dangerous, practices within the garage trade, and the partnership has had considerable success in its endeavours to safeguard consumers to date.

Trading Standards and Autodata, which has over 30 years' experience in providing precise information to the garage trade, have been able to advance efforts to create a climate whereby garages seeking to exploit consumers by avoiding responsibility for mistakes or by overcharging, are unable to get away with it.

Under the initiative, Trading Standards Officers have been provided with free access to Autodata's CD1 product, which arms them with information such as manufacturers' service schedules, diagnostic codes, timing belt replacement intervals and much more technical information.

Access to Autodata's data, which has been compiled in agreement with all major manufacturers and the Company's own meticulous research, can benefit all Trading Standards regions in many ways; for example, consumer enquiries relating to invoicing for the time spent working on a vehicle can be matched against manufacturers' repair times for a specific job – all of this data is up-to-date and very easy to access.

Devon County Council Trading Standards Service is one of those that has taken advantage of the Autodata service to combat bogus data vendors and resolve garage disputes.

Trading Standards Officer, John Smith, of DCC Trading Standards Service, was recently able to unravel an alleged offence involving a Trade Description of a vehicle. Mr Smith explains: "The vehicle in question had been supplied 'fully' serviced with no actual breakdown of what had been carried out in the service,"

When the garage in question was not forthcoming with an acceptable reason for this, he was then able to use Autodata's CD1. "The garage was not amenable so, straight away, our Autodata CD1 was utilised and I quickly found the manufacturers' service schedule of the specific vehicle; I was then able to quickly determine the exact 'full' service.

"The initial contact was made due to a serious problem with the brakes of the serviced vehicle. The vehicle had been returned twice after the service, each time with the same defective brakes."

The Autodata CD gave Mr Smith fast access to the model-specific service schedules and the fact the brake fluid had not been changed as stipulated in the 'full' service the garage had provided, making it simple to establish what had been missed. "Armed with this information, we were then able to apply the pressure required to compel the garage to make amends and fix the problem," concluded Mr Smith.

This is one example of the benefit the alliance can bring to the UK's Trading Standards departments and highlights how valuable a tool the Autodata product can be for both advisory and enforcement officers. Unfortunately, the product's effectiveness and Autodata's status as Europe's number one supplier of technical information to the motor industry also makes it a target for hackers and counterfeiters.

Despite Autodata's persistent attempts to protect its products, security measures designed to safeguard genuine examples are often breached by unscrupulous, but determined, individuals who, by selling out-of-date information, are putting those using the data and their customers at great risk.

Something as simple as wheel nut torque settings, if specified incorrectly, can cause dramatic failures which can easily result in injury. As part of the agreement with the Trading Standards Institute, Autodata will support officers in detecting the use of illegal software, and back prosecutions relating to this practice and any threat to its IP rights including unauthorised use of Autodata's logo, which is a registered Trademark.

Tony Swiatek, Autodata's Managing Director, commented: "We are really pleased to be in a position where we are able to provide all regions with the means to tackle such cases as the one Devon's Trading Standards officer highlights.

"We hope the offer of a year's free subscription to CD1 will mean that even more regions of Trading Standards are able to quickly and easily compare work carried out to what really should have been done, as specified by the manufacturer."

CD1 is extremely easy to install and use, helping Trading Standards departments to address consumer enquiries relating to time charged and components changed, identify counterfeit CDs, carry out 'mystery shopping' checks; placing information at their fingertips before visiting a suspect garage. Autodata also provides a telephone hotline for technical assistance.