5 common mistakes
operators make with their FORS audit

Beginning the journey towards FORS accreditation can feel daunting, it's necessary to be able to demonstrate that you have the right policies and procedures in place for gaining and maintaining your FORS accreditation.

Below are five common mistakes operators make that result in an audit failure and the recommended actions you can take to reduce the chance of failure.

1 Lack of policies and procedures

You must be able to provide one or more of the mandatory 17 written policies and procedures as outlined in the FORS Standard or be able to demonstrate and communicate that the policies have been reviewed, approved and signed.

Create   Establish a policy and procedure for each of the required areas as outlined in the FORS Standard

Manage   Have the ability to record that all policies and procedures have been approved and signed by senior management and are readily accessible to staff across all operating centres where applicable.

Report   Provide evidence that FORS documentation is reviewed a minimum of once every 12 months.

By using the FORS FMS Policy Manager module you can manage your policies and procedures. The system enables you to upload signed documents, store, edit, communicate and regularly review your policies, whether you're starting from scratch or simply improving the organisation of your existing documents. In addition, an interactive checklist will help you to log and forward-plan your actions, ensuring that nothing is overlooked.

2 Is training in place?

Drivers and managers need to complete various eLearning or training modules. You must be able to provide proof that the training has been carried out and provide evidence that a Professional Development Plan (PDP) for all staff is in place.

Create   A Professional Development Plan (PDP) for ALL drivers and all other staff involved in the fleet operation.

Manage   Make sure each driver completes a safety eLearning module every 12 months and FORS Professional Security and Counter-Terrorism eLearning module every 24 months. All managers need to complete approved training every five years.

Report   Provide evidence that all drivers have completed the mandatory training set out at Annex 1 of the FORS Standard

With FORS FMS you have a robust means of ensuring that your drivers are adequately trained and that any qualifications or certifications remain current and valid. Driver eLearning records conducted via FORS are automatically imported, and you can create records in the system for all other training and education connected with driving activity, including toolbox talks.

3 Manage your risk

With fleet, compliance is king. Being able to provide evidence of a Health and Safety policy or any risk assessments or method statements is necessary, not only for your FORS audit but also for your legal compliance.

Create   Produce an up to date Health and Safety policy.

Manage   Make sure all risk assessments and method statements are recorded in a robust way.

Report   Be able to provide evidence of a valid Health and Safety policy and all risk assessments or method statements listed in the demonstration for M8 on page 13 of the FORS Standard.

Risk assessments and policies associated with all aspects of vehicle and personal safety can be uploaded to FORS FMS. The system will alert you when review dates are due and stores evidence that instructions have been communicated to staff. You can also build records in the system of any training and education connected with safety, including toolbox talks, and allocate these to driver records so that you have an accurate, instantly accessible staff communication history.

4 Record your maintenance

You must have a written policy to cover inspections, servicing and repairs of your vehicles trailers and specialist equipment including leased vans. To prove you are managing your assets correctly you also need to have in place an up to date and robust system that shows all planned maintenance for a minimum of six months in advance. Operator Licence holders also need to provide copies of all safety inspections and other legally required documentation.

Create   Vehicle maintenance policy.

Manage   All maintenance in a robust platform to DVSA guidelines.

Report   All safety inspections and other legally required documentation.

Every record connected to the maintenance of your vehicles is stored in FORS FMS, for both current and historic vehicles. These include first use inspections – including hire vehicles and roller brake testing. This ensures you have a complete audit trail of fleet maintenance, including MOTs, servicing, PMIs, Vehicle Excise Duty (VED), tyre maintenance, tachograph calibrations, LOLER inspections and more. Advance 'traffic light' alerts give you a reliable means of forward-planning maintenance events, and if you operate with an O-licence you can instantly create downloadable maintenance planners as required.

5 Carry out vehicle inspections

You need to have in place a robust defect reporting procedure and also be able to prove that reported defects are being repaired.

Create   Deploy a robust platform to manage your daily walkaround inspections that will cover all vehicles, trailers and the specific safety equipment relating to FORS accreditation.

Manage   Make sure all inspections are carried out and that any defects reported are managed correctly.

Report   Be able to report on all inspections, even those with nil defects, including those where defects have been reported, rectified and signed to confirm completion.

The FORS FMS Mobile App allows you to create customised inspection sheets that your drivers access via their smartphone or tablet. Performing a vehicle check via the app is straightforward; drivers are guided easily through the check sequence and can submit descriptions of defects with supporting images. All data is imported straight to the system, with check dates, times and durations, giving the fleet manager a complete insight and enabling prompt defect resolution. With reporting on inspections completed/overdue and open/actioned defects is made easy.