



Department for Transport

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Dear Mr Gittins,

Re. report for the Prevention of Future Deaths
Inquest of Sadie McGrady - 13th of August 2013

I am writing in reply to your letter of 16th August to my colleagues at VOSA and DVLA as the policy lead for the Vehicle Identity Check (VIC) Scheme.

The Vehicle Identity Check Scheme was set up in 2003 following the introduction of the Vehicles Crime Act 2001. The purpose of the VIC scheme is to deter the crime of vehicle ringing. Typically, this involves the theft of a car of significant value, which is then given the identity of a similar car (make, model, colour etc) which has been the subject of an insurance write-off. The written-off car is obtained cheaply; its identity (Vehicle Identity Number (VIN) and Vehicle Registration Mark (VRM)) is then transferred to a higher value stolen car which, now apparently genuine, can be sold at market price.

At present, insurers log details of all written-off vehicles (approximately 385,000 vehicles per year) according to 4 salvage categories (A - scrap only; B - break for spare parts; C - repairable total loss where repair costs exceed the vehicle pre-accident value; D - repairable total loss where repair costs do not exceed the vehicle pre-accident value), and pass the information to the Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). The VIC scheme applies to salvage categories A, B and C; for these vehicles to be issued with a replacement Vehicle Registration Document (V5C) or licensing reminder (V11), they must undergo and pass a VIC check conducted by VOSA, which ensures the vehicle examined is the vehicle which had been written off.

About 75% of the checks that have been undertaken on cars which were 7 years or older were written-off because the cost of even small repairs was greater than the very low market value of the vehicle.

The Scheme, however, was never intended for the purpose of checking the roadworthiness of repaired written-off vehicles. If examiners identify any obvious roadworthiness defects on vehicles being VIC tested they can only bring them to the attention of the presenter. The VIC inspection is limited only to those features relating to the identity of the vehicle.

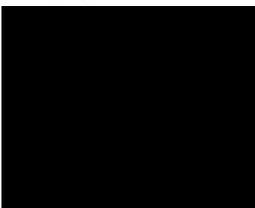
As stated in your report, the vehicle in question was not required to undergo a VIC check, as it was classed as a Category D.

Proposed European directives, which form the basis of domestic legislation around MOT inspections, could in future allow Member States to mandate the technical inspection of vehicles following extensive repairs. The current Roadworthiness Proposal also states that Member States may examine vehicles "after an accident with serious damage to the main safety related components of the vehicle such as wheels, suspension, deformation zones, steering or brakes,...". If this option became European law the UK Government could choose to transpose it into domestic legislation, following rigorous impact assessment.

However, the inspection of repaired, seriously damaged vehicles using the MOT system, would be limited to a visual check only and would not be able to inspect the integrity of welded structural repairs if they were obscured by sealant, mastic, trim, lining, carpets or other components (dismantling for MOT purposes is not permitted). Therefore, as mentioned in your report, it is unlikely that a standard MOT inspection would have detected a problem with the car in this case.

However, the Department for Transport are currently reviewing the Scheme¹, analysing ideas put forward during the Consultation. Should the Ministers decide to amend the scheme, feasible options will be subject to further consultation. Due to legal processes and Government priorities, the earliest the changes could be brought into scope would be 2015.

Yours sincerely,



¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-the-vehicle-identity-check-vic-scheme>