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Fleet reliability could hit deliveries during Black Friday rush

As 'Black Friday' hits and the start of the nation's Christmas shopping spree begins, new research from RAC Truck Rescue highlights concerns among some fleet operators that reliability issues could impact delivery logistics.

The research among 500 UK businesses running fleets reveals that almost a third (31%) struggle with reliability issues*. In addition, it is thought the cost of breakdowns coupled with a lack of drivers could affect deliveries on what has become the busiest day of the year for many supermarkets and retailers.

The findings have prompted head of RAC Truck Rescue Matt Dallaway to warn hauliers and delivery firms of the dangers of ignoring reliability issues at this time of year.

An estimated £810m was spent on Black Friday in the UK last year and with four times as many shoppers planning to take to the internet on Friday (November 27th) spending is expected to break the £1b barrier for the first time ever.**

But the findings from RAC Truck Rescue indicate the festive goodwill driven by price-cutting and heavy discounting could easily be undermined if firms struggle to deliver their goods and products on time. According to the survey, almost half of businesses (45%) view the cost of maintenance and repairs to their distribution fleets as a major issue, second only to the cost of fuel.

At the same time, the Road Haulage Association (RHA) has revealed that the industry needs another 45,000-50,000 drivers to keep up with the ever-increasing demand being placed on the sector.

The warning about the importance of maintaining fleets comes ahead of the time of year when the number of breakdowns rises sharply. The drop in temperature that comes with the arrival of winter weather conditions usually coincides in a sharp rise in callouts for the RAC's Truck Rescue service. Last year RAC Truck Rescue attended more than 100,000 breakdowns with about 10,000 taking place in November and December.

Head of RAC Truck Rescue Matt Dallaway said: "Black Friday, and internet sales in particular, are now a key element of the Christmas shopping season and this year sales are expected to pass the £1b mark for the first time. Most of those transactions will come from online sales and that sudden spike will put pressure on the distribution and haulage sector.

"Consumers expect prompt and reliable delivery of the items they have bought online and fleet operators will be preparing for the extra pressure that comes at this time of year. As such they need to ensure their vehicles are fit for purpose and that they have the right cover in place to mitigate the impact of any unexpected breakdowns.

"The RAC has been fixing trucks and HGVs for 30 years and we know dealing

with breakdowns can be costly for a business, but the greater cost is the disruption in the service and the impact it can have on their customers.”

RAC Business has developed a new subscription-based payment model for its Truck Rescue service to provide businesses with more manageable payment options. Instead of paying for each individual breakdown and risk unknown costs under the Pay-On-Use model, RAC Truck Rescue customers can now pay on an annual or monthly set-fee subscription basis, which includes up to four breakdowns a year.

For more go to: <http://www.rac.co.uk/business/truck-services/truck-breakdown-cover>

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Notes to Editors

* Research conducted on 500 UK business decision-makers by 3GEM Research and Insights in September 2015.

** IMRG Capgemini e-Retail Sales Index in partnership with Experian Marketing Services

About RAC Business Services

RAC is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists.

RAC Business offers a comprehensive range of services and products for UK businesses of all sizes from single vehicles up to large fleets

Products available include: fleet breakdown coverage, telematics, fuel cards, inspections, training, commercial business and motor insurance, fleet management (Business Club) and risk management services, as well as truck

breakdown, truck warranty and insurance for vehicles from 3.5t to 44t.

Any new business customer that purchases breakdown, telematics or our fuel card automatically becomes a member of the RAC Business Club.

RAC Business Club services include:

- Driver/employee record logging
- Company vehicle database
- Breakdown product access and administration
- RAC Fuel Card access, reporting and administration
- Maintenance and repair booking, schedules and documentation
- Ability to request quotes for other RAC products
- Ability to produce and download customised reports based on the above
- Access to exclusive member discounts through the RAC's automotive partners, including tyres, glass, servicing, MOT, repairs and hire vehicles

To find out more visit: <http://www.rac.co.uk/business/sme/business-club/>

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