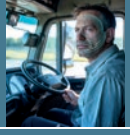

PAY ATTENTION: DRIVER DISTRACTION WARNINGS ARE OVERTAKING YOU IN 2026

From July 2026, all new EU trucks must detect driver distraction. UK fleets are following suit, turning in-cab monitoring systems from optional tech into a safety essential —whether drivers like it or not.

By Chris Menon
PHOTOGRAPHY BY VARIOUS

From July 7, 2026, all new trucks sold in the European Union (EU) must be equipped with Advanced Driver Distraction Warning (ADDW) systems — in addition to Driver Drowsiness and Attention Warning (DDAW) systems, which became mandatory two years earlier under the EU's General Safety Regulations (GSR2).

Although the UK is no longer part of the EU and hasn't formally signed up to the legislation, for all practical purposes, it is complying with the bill. Moreover, all the major European truck manufacturers contacted for this article, which included Volvo Trucks, Daimler Trucks, DAF, Iveco, Scania and MAN, confirmed that all their new trucks will meet the mandatory regulations by July 7, 2026.

It's a significant move that should further reduce road deaths involving HGVs. Although HGVs constitute a smaller portion of total traffic, they are more likely to be involved in fatal accidents compared to the average for all vehicles. Thus, in the UK in 2023, HGVs were involved in 11.6% of fatal accidents, despite making up only 5% of traffic on motorways.

Interestingly, the technology required to monitor distraction is far more complex than some of the rudimentary systems used to detect driver drowsiness, and it will necessitate the use of camera-based systems, known as Driver Monitoring Systems (DMS). As Anna Wrige Berling, Traffic & Product Safety Director at Volvo Trucks, confirms: "Although the legal requirement doesn't explicitly state that the system needs to be camera-based, the requirements to monitor driver gaze pretty much mean it has to be camera-based."

Indeed, the eye-tracking elements are so complex that to avoid constant false alarms (or false negatives), a great degree of accuracy is required when identifying distractions. As such, although the systems will be badged as coming from the truck manufacturers, they will be supplied by third-party tech companies that specialise in driver monitoring.

DMS available

Matthew Avery, Director of Strategic Development at Euro NCAP, states that no European truck manufacturer currently offers direct driver monitoring that meets GSR2 standards for driver fatigue and distraction.

It's a fact confirmed by the truck manufacturers named above, as well as by Colin Grover, Principal Engineer at Apollo Vehicle Safety. This company specialises in vehicle testing, regulation and rating. He states that, currently, none of the seven leading European truck manufacturers offer trucks equipped with a direct driver monitoring system utilising camera sensing. However, he agrees that this is about to change. "Direct driver monitoring systems are in development now, and we anticipate seeing a rapid rise in availability as the regulatory deadline approaches. The main automotive driver monitoring technology suppliers include Seeing Machines, Valeo, Smart Eye, Magna, Continental and Bosch."

In fact, seeing both Magna and Valeo use Machines' DMS, while Tobii should also be added to the select list of suppliers to the Tier 1s who work with truck manufacturers.


Mainfreight driver using Seeing Machines' Guardian Gen 3, helping detect distraction

Indeed, as Seeing Machines, Smart Eye, and Tobii are generally regarded as the top three suppliers of this highly specialised technology, a summary of their respective systems follows.

Seeing Machines

Seeing Machines' third-generation Guardian system offers automotive-grade driver

drowsiness and distraction detection, which it claims is the most accurate on the market, protecting drivers in real-time with 94% accuracy (meaning only 6% false positives).

Sophisticated face and eye-tracking algorithms measure a driver's head position, eye gaze and eye closure to detect fatigue and distraction. When Guardian's in-vehicle system detects a drowsy or distracted driving event, it intervenes in real time through a set of audio, visual, and vibration alerts. Instant feedback encourages drivers to avoid risky behaviours and allows them to recognise and develop strategies to mitigate these risks.

The Guardian captures the duration of an 'event', the speed of the vehicle at the time, the distance travelled during the event, which alarms were activated, the GPS location, and video footage of the driver.

For drivers concerned that it acts as a 'spy' in the cab, the company points out that Guardian is not a CCTV and cannot be accessed remotely under any circumstances. Only fatigue or distraction events are captured, analysed at its Guardian Centre and then the company is notified within minutes of a confirmed fatigue event, so that it can intervene and protect the driver in the way it wants.

ABOVE: From July 2026, all new EU trucks must include camera-based driver monitoring systems to detect distraction

Seeing Machines technology is currently in use in Ford, Mercedes, BMW, and VW cars, as well as over 60,000 trucks worldwide, from Australia to the UK.

Smart Eye

Smart Eye didn't want to answer questions, but it does offer its AIS 12 DMS for aftermarket installation in HGVs. This protects against driver fatigue and distraction. On its website, it explains: "AIS is a complete hardware and software system that consists of a standalone camera unit and an Electronic Control Unit (ECU) module. Through wireless connectivity, it can be smoothly integrated with fleet management systems."

Tobii

Tobii offers driver monitoring that is capable of identifying driver fatigue and also distraction in real time, claiming "negligible false positives". However, it doesn't provide a percentage level for its accuracy.

A spokesperson boasts that: "Pre-integrating DMS as a software solution, working directly as part of the ecosystem under the OEM, has a higher rigour than the aftermarket solutions."

Its focus is purely on supplying pre-integrated DMS systems to manufacturers. Thus, it doesn't market its DMS to fleet operators, telling Trucking Magazine: "Fleet operators might make better use of aftermarket DMS systems that can be easily integrated post vehicle acquisition."

> "It is not just about installing the technology, but using it effectively –with training, human interaction and support"

Further concerns

Of course, while truck manufacturers will be factory-fitting DMS systems that can measure both fatigue and distraction, it remains a moot point as to whether the system chosen by an individual manufacturer is necessarily the best from the user's perspective.

Indeed, fleet operators may be forced to kiss a lot of frogs in their tech search that doesn't annoy their drivers with false alarms. Mercifully, though, the fears of constant and intrusive monitoring of drivers are not believed to be an issue with any of the systems named above.

For example, Mainfreight is a global logistics company that recently upgraded its truck fleet to Seeing Machines ' third-generation Guardian DMS, which includes its 24/7 monitoring service, as its drivers are on the roads at all hours of the day. Ashley Taylor, National Support at Mainfreight, outlines the improvements. "The Gen 2 technology was good, but like all technology, it evolves, and the next step to Gen 3 is fantastic." In addition to a clearer view of the driver with more accurate fatigue detection, it also has distraction detection.

As to how drivers view the system, Taylor reveals that education was key to a successful rollout of the system: "The drivers need to be shown the system and how it works and what can be accessed so they are aware you cannot just log in and watch what they are doing at any time."

While fleet operators themselves are not required to retrofit older vehicles under current regulations, there are sound reasons to consider doing so. Not least among them is that these systems have been proven to help prevent accidents, thereby increasing the level of safety for drivers and other road users, and ultimately reducing insurance premiums.

Daniel King, Portfolio Manager at QBE Insurance, is clearly very positive on this new camera-based driver monitoring technology, as he explains: "We've heard many examples of how our clients are using this technology to reduce the risk exposure and believe it has already prevented fatalities." He cites one example where a truck driver was falling asleep at the wheel and ignoring alerts. Fortunately, it was connected to their fleet operator system, and an operator intervened to call and tell them to pull over.

"This example shows how new technology helps reduce accidents but also indicates how important it is to use it effectively. It is not just about installing and investing in the technology, but there needs to be the right training, human interaction and support so that it's used effectively," he adds.

As to whether it can reduce insurance premiums, King comments: "We try to take a more proactive approach with our fleets so that we are working with our insureds, not just to to help manage the cost of their insurance but share safety insights, forecasts, and technology trends so that with these businesses we are working to create safer roads and reduce risks and claims volatility."

Indeed, if you're running a fleet with a mixture of old and brand new trucks, it might make commercial sense to at least research the benefits of DMS, then choose one after benchmarking it against others. Otherwise, you may be overtaken by rivals who've embraced this life-saving technology.