

Commission for Taxi Regulation Publishes New Vehicle Standards

(26 November 2007) The Commission for Taxi Regulation has today published new vehicle standards for the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry, including taxis, hackneys and limousines. The new standards will bring in reforms across a wide range of areas within the sector on a phased basis from 2008 to 2012.

The document is the culmination of a consultation process which began last year attracting submissions from the industry, consumers and other interested parties including organisations representing people with disabilities and vehicle suppliers.

The new standards cover a number of areas including vehicle condition, basic vehicle specification, comfort and safety and wheelchair accessible taxis and hackneys. Accessibility is a key theme, not only in ensuring that all taxis and hackneys are more accessible to those with disabilities but also specifically with major improvements to the wheelchair accessible service.

Commissioner for Taxi Regulation Kathleen Doyle commented, "The primary aim of the new standards is to improve the quality of service, comfort and safety for all passengers and drivers. Generally speaking, the existing SPSV fleet is of a high standard, however, it is essential that we ensure that everyone in the industry meets the same standards so that consumers can be confident of a consistent service nationwide.

Currently, we have 25,019 vehicles on the road operating as SPSVs and there is a huge diversity in this fleet, with over 250 different models. Whilst we are not looking to put any particular vehicle off the road or direct drivers towards one particular vehicle, there are certain minimum conditions that must be met in terms of age, size, accessibility and other criteria. It is well known that more modern vehicles are safer and more environmentally friendly and that has played a role in the establishment of the new standards."

Some of the main features of the new vehicle standards are;

Standard Taxis and Hackneys:

(For new applicants from 01/01/09, existing licence holders from 01/01/12)

- Vehicle age of not more than nine years
- Luggage capacity of 420 litres
- Small cars, i.e. those not capable of seating four adult passengers in comfort are no longer permitted

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles:

(For new applicants from 2008, existing licence holders from 01/01/12)

- New Category of wheelchair accessible hackney
- Vehicles capable of seating one person in their wheelchair and at least three adult passengers
- Wheelchair accessible vehicles will now meet the requirement to meet new EC directive regarding safety standards for all vehicles
- Goods vehicles converted to wheelchair accessible vehicles will no longer be permitted, conversions should be made to passenger vehicles instead

Limousines

(For new applicants from 01/01/09, existing licence holders from 01/01/12)

- Modified vehicles or stretch vehicles will now require an engineers report prior to licensing
- Further consultation with the industry regarding categories of limousines and age limit

All SPSVs will be required to have:

(For all licence holders from 01/01/09)

- Good standard of cleanliness
- Safety equipment including a fire extinguisher, First Aid kit, advance warning triangle, high visibility reflective vest
- Torch
- Pen and paper

Ms Doyle further commented that, "It is essential that we enable service providers sufficient advance notice to enable future business planning. With this in mind, the new standards will co-exist with the existing standards for a period of time in order to enable a smooth transition. In the case of wheelchair accessible vehicles in particular, the new specifications will have cost implications for the industry and therefore the Commission has made a submission to the Department of Transport for a subsidy for the industry for purchasing new wheelchair accessible taxis and hackneys."

The Commissioner concluded by saying; "As ever, I must acknowledge the professionalism and high level of service provided by a large number of SPSV operators and I am confident that the new vehicle standards will see everyone operating to the same high standards. We look forward to working with all in the business in implementing these new regulations to improve the overall experience for customers and ensuring that Ireland has a SPSV fleet of which everyone can be proud."

'Vehicle Standards' is available on the Commission's website: www.taxiregulator.ie, from the Commission's offices at 35 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin 2 or by calling the Industry Information Line on 1890 347 347.

Ends

Notes for Editors

The Minister for Transport established the Commission for Taxi Regulation as an Independent Public Body under Part 2 of the Taxi Regulation Act 2003 on 1st September 2004. The principal function of the Commission is the development and maintenance of a regulatory framework for the control and operation of small public service vehicles (SPSVs) and their drivers.

As of November 1st 2007 there are a total of 25,019 active SPSV Licences. This includes 17,485 Taxis, 1,464 Wheelchair Accessible Taxis, 4,759 Hackneys and 1,311 Limousines.

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A full copy of Vehicle Standards is available on request or from the Commission website – www.taxiregulator.ie