

Licence number

T-54321

Vehicle registration number

06-MO-88888

Licence for 4 passengers

Expiry date

06/08



# Industry News

Taxi, Hackney and Limousine Industry News

## Working with the industry

Since its establishment the Commission for Taxi Regulation has been fully committed to communicating and working in consultation with all involved in the taxi, hackney and limousine industry. Our aim is to achieve the highest possible industry standards for the benefit of all concerned.

In an attempt to keep people informed and to ensure maximum input into our activity, we have published a number of consultation and research documents together with an Action Plan for 2006-2007. All of these documents are available on our website [www.taxiregulator.ie](http://www.taxiregulator.ie) or directly from the Commission.

As the industry is made up of so many self-employed operators, we know that, despite circulating over 100,000 copies of the various documents, not everyone in the industry is aware of the Commission and its work. We also know that much speculation and rumour exists in the industry and that this is the cause of unnecessary anxiety to some service providers and their families.

To ensure that operators and drivers are consulted and kept informed of changes and developments in the industry, the Commission will in future communicate directly with all SPSV Licence holders in Ireland. This is now possible as the Commission becomes the National Licensing Authority and will have contact details for all current licence holders. This Newsletter will become a regular channel of communication. It is therefore my pleasure to introduce you to our first issue of Industry News.

The principal function of the Commission is the development and the maintenance of regulations for the control and operation of taxis, hackneys and limousines. We are committed to developing a quality and customer-oriented licensing system "to achieve a first class professional, efficient, safe and accessible customer-friendly service for a small public service vehicle passengers and service providers".

Through our widespread consultation and research, we have identified a wide range of areas where reform is required. The changes and reforms that the Commission will put in place during 2006 and 2007 are set out in the Commission's Action Plan for 2006-2007 Driving Forward. I would strongly urge that every person involved in the SPSV industry should read this Action Plan.

One of the key features of the Action Plan is the introduction of the new vehicle licensing system that will be administered by National Car Testing Service (NCTS) on behalf of the Commission.

Among the most imminent changes are the new national taximeter area and the new national taxi fare.

This will see the entire country become one taximeter area and the introduction of a new national maximum fare that will apply to all taxi fares for all taxi journeys from 25th September 2006. The new national taxi fare will consist of an initial charge, a distance-related charge or a time-related charge, a premium at certain times and on certain days and extras where applicable.

We will have further consultation on the proposed new vehicle standards regime commencing in June 2006. Consultation is at the very core of the Commission's activities. The Commission alone will not deliver the improvements in services which service providers and service users seek and deserve. This can only be achieved in conjunction with the industry. We value the input of the industry in all our decisions; indeed in this regard the various submissions and letters received from service providers played an important role in the development of the Action Plan.

Your views in relation to the formulation of the new vehicles standards will be particularly important and a copy of the consultation document will be forwarded to you when available.

I hope that you will find this and future editions of the Newsletter both useful and informative. On page four we provide the answers to some of the most frequently asked questions we have received from licence holders following the publication of the Action Plan. Should you have any queries in relation to aspects of the Commission's work that are not covered here, please contact us.

We look forward to working in co-operation with the many professional drivers and operators who comply with their legal obligations and provide a quality service. Our actions will significantly benefit such operators and drivers while our strong enforcement measures will bring an end to non-compliance and illegal or unscrupulous behaviour that tarnishes the industry.

**Ger Deering**  
Commissioner for Taxi Regulation



# National Vehicle Licensing System Begins

**Drivers and owners informed the Commission during our consultations that the SPSV Licensing systems were cumbersome and out-dated.** In response, on becoming the Licensing Authority in October 2005 the Commission immediately set about reforming the vehicle licensing system. We will put in place similar reforms for the SPSV driver licensing system in 2007. We are conscious that time is money for service suppliers and that an efficient, streamlined licensing process that eliminates downtime and keeps cost to a minimum is what is required. To meet the needs of drivers and owners we are putting in place a new licensing system that will ensure a high quality, efficient and consistent service for SPSVs throughout the country.

The roll-out of the new National Vehicle Licensing System began in April in Cork and Galway. The National Car Testing Service (NCTS) has been awarded the contract to administer SPSV Licences on the Commission's behalf. The new national system replaces the process where 88 local authorities were the licensing authorities.

In future SPSV Licence holders will be able to renew their vehicle licence up to twelve weeks in advance of the expiry date. As part of the new licensing system licence holders will receive up to six weeks advance notice in writing from the Commission reminding them of the expiry date of their licence together with a request to book their NCT test. This can be done by telephoning the dedicated **SPSV lo-call number 1890 927 977**, opening hours are also available on this number, please note these hours vary throughout the country.

Following the roll-out of the new licensing system across the country from April to August 2006, local authorities will no longer have a role in SPSV Licensing. When the full roll-out is finalised the new licensing service will also be available at any NCT centre of the licence holder's choice without an appointment. However, vehicle roadworthiness and suitability tests will continue to be by appointment. The tests and licensing can be carried out at the same time or at separate times.

Licences will be granted, renewed or transferred at all 43 NCT centres throughout the country on production of:

- **A valid SPSV NCT certificate**  
*(For renewing an SPSV Licence, the NCT Certificate must be in force for not more than 90 days prior to the date on which the licence comes into operation. In the case of a new application for an SPSV Licence, an NCT Certificate must be in force not more than 180 days prior to the date on which the SPSV Licence comes into operation.)*
- **A suitability certificate from the NCT** *(Where required)*
- **A valid SPSV insurance certificate in respect of the vehicle**
- **A valid Tax Clearance Certificate in respect of the licence holder applicant**  
*(The name and address on the tax clearance certificate must be the same as those on the SPSV Licence)*
- **The appropriate fee of €125 for renewals or transfer of licences**

## Lapsed Licences

**Any licence not renewed within the 12-week period prior to the expiry date will lapse.**

In order to facilitate people who are unable to renew within that period, a person may apply to the Commission to have a lapsed licence restored using Form A4, available at NCTS centres. Any such application must be made within six months of the expiry date. If such an application is granted the Commission will inform NCTS to restore the licence on production of the appropriate documentation and payment of a licence restoration fee of €500.

Where a licence has lapsed for more than six months, an application for restoration may be made to the District Court. Where the application is granted, The Commission will then inform the NCTS to restore the licence on payment of the €500 restoration fee and production of the correct documentation.

## New National Licence Numbers

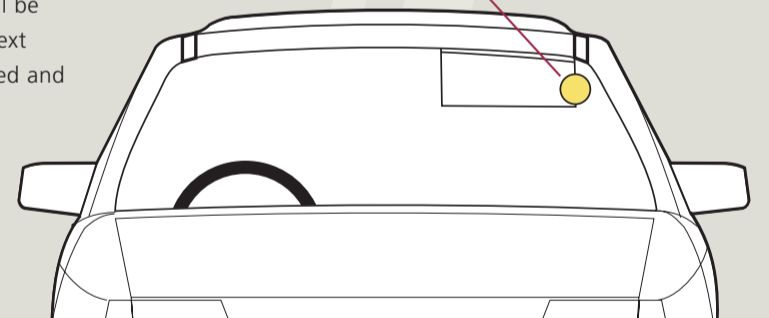
**Over the coming months a new unique national licence number will be issued for every taxi, hackney and limousine in the country.**

This will be in the form of a five-digit identification number starting from 10,001 and will replace the existing numbers displayed on taxi signs and on hackney and limousine plates.

This new licence number will also be displayed on the tamper-proof disc affixed to the front windscreen and rear window of all licensed SPSVs on renewal of the licence. Taxi licence holders will be required to update the licence number on their roof signs within 28 days of receipt of the new number. Hackney and limousine licence holders will be requested to continue to display their current plate until the next renewal date at which time the tamper-proof disc will be affixed and the existing plate will no longer be required.

Following the completion of a pilot phase of the programme in Cork and Galway, the roll-out of the National Licence System and Numbers will begin in May. The programme will be completed by the end of August.

The Commission will write to all existing SPSV Licence holders informing them of their new National Licence Number in advance of the rollout of the new National Licensing System in their area, as set out in the table below.



### Guideline on timing for distribution of new vehicle licence numbers

Region	New Licence Numbers Issued	New Licensing System Commencing
Galway, Cork	April	April
Wicklow, Kildare, Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny, Carlow, Laois, Offaly, Westmeath, Tipperary, Limerick, Kerry	May	May
Roscommon, Longford, Clare, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim	June	June
Louth, Cavan, Meath, Donegal, Monaghan	July	July
Dublin	May/June	August

## Implementation

Implementing the new licensing system involves the collection of all SPSV records and files from 88 existing Licensing Authorities and physically collating them in the Commission's offices.

The information contained in these files will be inputted to a new national database and Vehicle Licence Register that will be used as part of the new licensing process.

As the Commission collects the records from the various local authorities and enters the information on the new database, a letter will be issued from the Commission to each and every vehicle licence holder with details of the new licensing system together with a new unique vehicle licence number.

The numbers will be issued on a phased basis between now and the beginning of July to ensure that they can also be incorporated into taximeters and their printers at the same time as the new fare structure. Taximeter receipts will be required to display the new vehicle licence number from 25th September 2006 onwards in conjunction with the introduction of the new National Taxi Fare. Hackneys and Limousines will be required to include the new licence number on receipts from that date also.

The new numbers are an essential part of the new licensing system and will remove the significant duplication of numbers that currently exists due to the fact that the various local authorities previously had similar numbering systems.

The new numbering will make identification of licence holders much easier through a new national register of licences. Unlicensed SPSVs and those with lapsed licences will be easier to detect with the new system. This will provide better opportunities for licensed and compliant drivers and owners and bring benefit to both operators and customers.

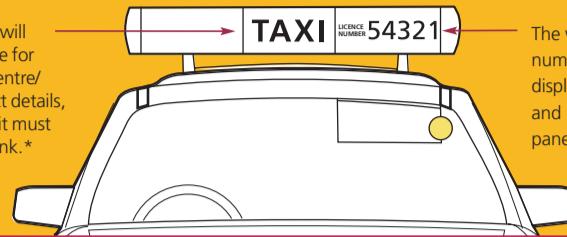
## Taxi Roof Signs

The Commission has notified all suppliers of roof signs on its database informing them of the changes being introduced and requirements in relation to the size and positioning of text. These can be seen in the diagram opposite. In addition to the new licence numbers wheelchair accessible taxis should display a symbol denoting that they are wheelchair accessible.

A document with further information on taxi signs is available on the Commission's website [www.taxiregulator.ie](http://www.taxiregulator.ie) or directly from the Commission.

### Presentation of taxi roof sign – non wheelchair-accessible vehicles

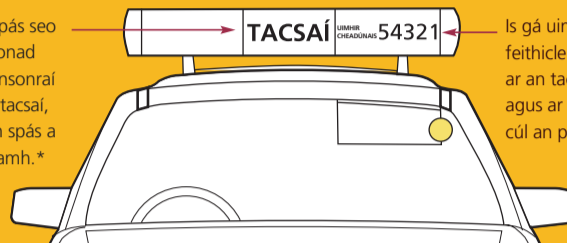
This space will be available for dispatch centre/ taxi contact details, otherwise it must remain blank.\*



The vehicle licence number must be displayed front and back in this panel.

### Tíolacadh fógra dín tacsáí as Gaeilge

Beidh an spás seo ar fáil do ionad seolta/mionsonraí teagmháil tacsáí, nó is gá an spás a fhágáil folamh.\*



Is gá uimhir ceadúnas feithicle a thaispeáint ar an taobh tosaigh agus ar an taobh cúl an phainéil seo.

### Presentation of taxi roof sign – wheelchair-accessible vehicles

Wheelchair accessible vehicles must display this symbol in a prominent manner, front and back.\*



\*Note: SPSV representative body details can be displayed in this panel but their telephone numbers should not be included to avoid confusion for passengers or potential passengers

## Fares and Receipts

During our consultations both service suppliers and customers alike expressed serious dissatisfaction with the existing antiquated taximeter areas and the range and complexity of taxi fare structures and rates.

### Taxi Fare

To address these problems the Commission will declare the entire country one taximeter area from the 25th September 2006. Following a comprehensive review of current fare structures across the country, the Commission has decided to introduce a new National Taxi Fare effective from the 25th September 2006, which will mean the maximum charge for taxi travel will be uniform throughout the country.

Operators will be required to have the new fare structure programmed into their meters by this date. In advance of this, the Commission has provided technical guidance to meter programmers, installers and other interested parties to ensure that all taximeters are correctly calibrated. This document is available on the Commission's website [www.taxiregulator.ie](http://www.taxiregulator.ie) or directly from the Commission.

The new fare structure includes an initial charge that contains both a time and distance allowance. Further travel beyond the initial charge will be based on a graduated structure of three tariffs. The standard fare structure will operate by day, while a premium will be applied to travel at night and on public holidays and Sundays. Certain extras will also apply, two of which will be recorded on the meter (additional passengers and booking fee).

A diagram illustrating the main components of the new fare structure and rates is provided to the right. The meter should also be programmed to observe the change of hours from Summer Time to Winter Time, specified public holidays and information for inclusion on the mandatory printed receipt.

It will be an offence to operate a taxi vehicle on or after September 25th without a taximeter calibrated to charge according to the new National Taxi Fare.

### Taxi Receipts

Taxis will continue to be required to provide a receipt to all customers on payment of their fare. Taxi receipt printers should therefore be set to automatically print a receipt for all taxi journeys. From the 25th of September taxi receipts must include:

- The receipt number
- The new SPSV Licence number
- The vehicle registration number
- The start date of the trip
- The distance travelled in kilometres
- The start and finish time of the trip
- The amount calculated by the meter broken down into total fare and extras
- A space allowing for the manual recording of tips/discounts/tolls
- A space to allow for calculation of the final amount paid (allowing for deduction or discounts or addition of tips or tolls)

Hackney and Limousine drivers/operators will be required to provide customers with receipts in respect of all journeys from the 25th of September 2006 on payment of the fare.

### Hackney receipts must include:

- The receipt number
- The new SPSV Licence number
- The vehicle registration number
- The date
- The distance travelled in kilometres
- The amount charged

### Limousine receipts must include:

- The receipt number
- The new SPSV Licence number
- The vehicle registration number
- The date
- The amount charged

National maximum taxi fare effective from 25th September 2006			
<b>Standard rate</b> 8.00h—20.00h		<b>Premium rate</b> 20.00h—8.00h & Sundays & public holidays	
<small>Distance rate applies unless speed drops below 21 km/h when time rate applies.</small>		<small>Distance rate applies unless speed drops below 21 km/h when time rate applies.</small>	
<b>INITIAL CHARGE</b> Includes 1km or 170 secs	€3.80 Fixed	<b>INITIAL CHARGE</b> Includes 1km or 170 secs	€4.10 Fixed
<b>TARIFF A</b> Next 14km or 40 mins Up to €17.20	€0.95 per km or €0.34 per min	<b>TARIFF A</b> Next 14km or 40 mins Up to €21.70	€1.25 per km or €0.44 per min
<b>TARIFF B</b> Next 15km or 43 mins Up to €36.00	€1.25 per km or €0.44 per min	<b>TARIFF B</b> Next 15km or 43 mins Up to €43.50	€1.45 per km or €0.51 per min
<b>TARIFF C</b> Over 30km or 86 mins Over €36.00	€1.63 per km or €0.58 per min	<b>TARIFF C</b> Over 30km or 86 mins Over €43.50	€1.63 per km or €0.58 per min
<b>EXTRA CHARGES</b> (where relevant)	Booking fee €2.00. Second and additional passengers €1.00 each (two children under twelve equal one adult).	Toll charges as applicable. Soiling charge €125.00.	Tips at customer's discretion. Discount at driver's discretion.

## Have your say on vehicle standards

Consultation is due to begin in June on the Commission's proposals for new vehicle standards. The Commission intends to put in place a new code of vehicle standards which balances overall quality, accessibility and safety improvements that allow passengers to embark, travel and disembark safely and comfortably on the one hand with the costs and other practical implications that these reforms will impose on drivers and operators.

Considerable research has already been carried out into vehicle standards, the findings of that research were set out in the National Review. The issues relating to vehicle standards, the need for change and the changes under consideration by the Commission were outlined in our second consultation paper, the Roadmap Document.

This consultation process generated a high level of feedback and this input, together with further research, will form the basis of a consultation paper on vehicle standards to be published in June this year. This paper will set out the improvements to vehicle standards proposed by the Commission. A copy of the document will be sent directly to every SPSV Licence holder when it is available. All drivers/operators and other interested parties will then have the opportunity to make their views known on the proposals. Following the consultation period the new standards will be announced in 2007 and begin to take effect from 2008 onwards.

In order to allow for an orderly transition and enable service providers reasonable time to modify their vehicles, the new standards will be put in place side by side with existing standards at least until 2010.

## SPSV Driver/Owner Handbook

In our discussions with drivers/owners a clear requirement for an SPSV Driver/Owner Handbook was identified. To meet this need the Commission will prepare a handbook that will provide the owners and drivers of SPSVs with all the information required to own, operate and drive an SPSV. This will also prove useful in explaining to customers their obligations towards drivers and may assist in resolving potential disputes or misunderstandings. It will be necessary to put the new regulations and administrative process in place prior to developing such a handbook. The handbook will be supplied to all SPSV Licence holders in 2007.

In the meantime if you have any suggestions as to what should be included in the handbook please let us know. A separate guide will be available for customers to inform them of their rights and obligations.

# Your Questions Answered

## 1. What name and address must be appear on my Tax Clearance Certificate?

The name and address on the Tax Clearance Certificate submitted in relation to an application for or renewal of an SPSV Licence must be the same name and address of the applicant for the SPSV.

## 2. Does the Insurance Certificate have to be in the name of the applicant?

No, the Insurance Certificate does not have to be in the name of the applicant but it must clearly identify the vehicle to which the application or renewal relates, and that the insurance cover is for an SPSV. A letter is not sufficient evidence of an insurance policy. Therefore a Certificate of Insurance (if necessary a certificate for temporary cover) must accompany all new applications and renewals.

## 3. What if I do not renew my vehicle licence by the expiry date?

Small public service vehicle licences not renewed by the expiry date will lapse on that date. It is an offence to operate an SPSV without a valid licence. The holder of a lapsed licence can apply to the Commission within six months of the expiry date to have the licence restored stating the reason the licence has lapsed. If the Commission approves the restoration, the licence will be restored through the NCTS on payment of a restoration fee of €500. The Commission may waive part of the fee in particular circumstances of hardship. Application forms to restore a lapsed licence are available from the NCTS.

## 4. When is a NCT Certificate valid for SPSV Purposes?

For renewing an SPSV Licence the NCT Certificate must be in force for not more than 90 days prior to the date on which the licence comes into operation and in the case of a new application for an SPSV Licence an NCT Certificate must be in force not more than 180 days prior to the date on which the SPSV Licence comes into operation.

## 5. How will I be informed of my new National Licence Number?

The Commission will write to all existing SPSV Licence holders informing them of their new National Licence Number in advance of the rollout of the new National Licensing System in their area.

## 6. When will taxis have to display the new licence number?

Taxis will be required to display the new National Licence Number on their taxi sign within 28 days of receiving the number from the Commission. The new National Licence Number will not be required to be printed on the receipt until the 25th September 2006. This is so the new number can be programmed in conjunction with the new National Taxi Fare. It can of course be printed at an earlier date.

## 7. What happens if I change my vehicle?

Prior to changing your vehicle you must make an application to transfer your licence to the new vehicle. Your licence will no longer remain valid unless this transfer is made. You should make this application prior to changing vehicle ownership of the original licensed vehicle otherwise your licence will lapse.

## 8. When will Hackneys and Limousines be required to display the new National Licence Number?

Hackneys and limousines are requested to keep their existing SPSV Licence plates in place until their licence has been renewed using the new National Licensing System. At that stage a tamper-proof disc with details of the licence number, the vehicle, the expiry date of the licence and the number of passengers for which the vehicle is licensed will be affixed to the front windscreen and rear window of the vehicle. When the tamper-proof discs are in place the old plates should be removed.

## 9. Can I operate while the seal on my taximeter is broken?

When a taximeter seal is broken, an appointment should be made with the Legal Metrology Service to have the meter verified. When a licence holder has proof that an appointment date has been made with the legal Metrology Service, they may continue to operate without their meters sealed. The obligation is on the driver to ensure the meter is sealed as soon as is possible.

## 10. Why are receipts required?

The Commission is requiring mandatory details on all receipts to protect both consumers and service suppliers. The receipts will form an important part of the National Complaints System to be established by the Commission. In the case of taxis, the inclusion of the Vehicle Registration Number together with the tamper-proof disc will greatly aid enforcement and reduce the risk of unlicensed vehicles being used or taximeters being transferred to a vehicle which has not been verified. These measures will protect consumers and compliant drivers and operators.

## 11. Do receipts have to be automatically printed in taxis and provided to the passenger at the end of the journey?

Yes. This is a requirement under existing regulations but is not always carried out in practice. The Commission will be enforcing the provision of automatically printed receipts in line with the introduction of the new national taxi fare from the 25th September 2006.

## 12. What if the passenger refuses to take a receipt?

The driver of an SPSV is only required to print (for taxis) or write the receipt (for hackneys and limousines) and offer it to the passenger. If a passenger refuses to take the offered receipt the only obligation the driver has is to keep a record of the fare as proof the receipt was offered.

## 13. Should all fares be charged on the meter after 25th September 2006?

All fares should be charged on the meter after the 25th September 2006 with one notable exception. In cases where a prior written agreement is in place between the taxi supplier and the customer, it will not be necessary to charge according to the meter. In these cases the written agreement must be put in place in advance of the hire. In all circumstances, including where a prior written agreement exists, the meter should always run for the duration of the journey.

It will not be permissible for taxis plying for hire or standing for hire on the street or at transport terminals to ask customers to sign agreements that would not require the use of the meter. Prior written agreements will only apply to pre-booked taxi trips. In all cases a discount from the metered fare can be offered to the customer.

## 14. What do I do if I am concerned that the passenger might not pay the fare?

You are entitled to satisfy yourself in advance that the passenger can pay the fare. You can do this by asking them to prove that they have the required amount, to pay a deposit or to pay the estimated fare in advance. Where the amount paid in advance is more than the metered fare, change should be given at the end of the journey. If the customer is unable to prove that they have the required amount to pay the fare, this could be deemed a reasonable basis for refusing the journey.

## 15. On what basis can a taxi driver refuse to take a fare?

From the 25th September 2006 a taxi driver plying for hire or standing for hire in the street or at a transport terminal shall not unreasonably refuse to take a passenger wishing to travel up to 30 kilometers. Drivers can refuse to take journeys beyond this distance.

## 16. Will SPSV drivers be required to display identification in their vehicles from September?

Yes. The Commission will provide temporary identification for SPSV drivers while we reform the SPSV driver licensing process and develop a new smart card type of SPSV driver licence and identification.

## 17. Do I have to carry luggage in my vehicle?

Yes. You are required to drive the vehicle with such persons and luggage as the hirer may reasonably direct and to afford reasonable assistance in loading and unloading luggage. Drivers should ensure that all luggage is secure and does not present a safety risk to the driver or passenger. Drivers may refuse to carry luggage that could present a safety risk.

## 18. Can I charge less than the maximum fare?

Yes. You may charge less than the new national taxi fare from September 25th 2006. You must calculate the fare on the meter and you can give a discount or not charge for extras. You can also offer the passenger the option of paying a fixed amount or the amount of the meter whichever is the lesser.

## 19. How will the new national taximeter area affect taxi drivers?

Drivers will be able to ply for hire or stand for hire at taxi ranks in the area for which their SPSV driver licence was issued.

**Additional frequently asked questions are available on our website [www.taxiregulator.ie](http://www.taxiregulator.ie)**

For further information on the Action Plan 'Driving Forward' 2006/2007 or any matter relating to SPSVs please contact the Commission for Taxi Regulation, 35 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin 2 or by telephone 01 659 3800 or alternatively via the Commission's website: [www.taxiregulator.ie](http://www.taxiregulator.ie) or email [commission@taxiregulator.ie](mailto:commission@taxiregulator.ie)