

Licence number

T-54321

Vehicle registration number

00 110 88888

Industry News

Taxi, Hackney and Limousine Industry News

Vehicle Standards Update



The Commission received over 190 submissions in response to its last consultation paper on vehicle standards. All submissions are currently being analysed with various representative groups and stakeholders being consulted. The Commission is considering all views which will assist them in providing a solution that balances overall quality, accessibility and safety improvements to enable all passengers to embark, travel and disembark with safety and comfort. A regulatory impact assessment of the core proposals outlined in the consultation paper is also to commence shortly.

A number of pilot schemes are also being planned to assist in the assessment of the costs and benefits of ideas including:

- Possible inclusion of a 'swivel' passenger seat for all vehicles and 1 or wheelchair accessible vehicles
- Possible inclusion of an induction loop in wheelchair accessible vehicles
- Possible inclusion of an audible taximeter
- Effectiveness of in-vehicle security shields or transparent divisor
- Effectiveness of in-vehicle CCTV cameras
- Establishment of a 'Quality Mark' awarded for a high levels of service

The Commission is currently formulating an outline for how the pilot schemes will operate and will communicate with parties who have registered an interest in involvement in the next 2-3 months.

Anyone who would like to register their interest in any of the above pilots should contact our Industry Assistance Line on **1890 347 347**. Interested parties should note that there are some restrictions on participation as some of the products have a limited range of vehicle compatibility.

It is anticipated that details of the new vehicle standards will be published towards the end of the year.

Vehicle Licensing

April 2007 marked the first anniversary of the introduction of the national vehicle licensing system for SPSVs, administered by the National Car Testing Service (NCTS) on behalf of the Commission. All active licences will have been renewed at least once under the new system by October 2007 and the system is already contributing to improved compliance within the industry.

As part of its commitment to continually enhance its services, but also in responding to feedback from industry members, the Commission conducted a review of the service in April and is working with the NCTS on a number of enhancements, including the provision of a wider range of information to current and prospective vehicle licence holders.

As part of this, new application forms for licensing and a suite of information guides will be launched in the coming weeks and made available on the Commission's website, in NCTS test centres and through the Commission's industry assistance line **1890 347 347**.

Included in this mailing is the document "A Review of the Transferability of Small Public Service Vehicle Taxi licences". Licence holders are invited to give their views on this in writing to the Commission by the 1st of September 2007.

Licensing Reminders

- To avoid lapsing, licences must be renewed **on or before** the date of expiry. All licence holders will receive a written reminder 12 weeks before this date, and can renew their licence from this time.
- The Commission urges licence holders to renew as soon as possible in advance of the expiry date.
- The Commission cannot accept responsibility for any delays in the renewal process due to licence holders' paperwork not being in order.
- If your licence is lapsed, you will have to apply for the restoration of your licence directly to the Commission. Application forms for the restoration of lapsed licences are available on www.taxiregulator.ie or by ringing **1890 347 347**. Any licences lapsed for over six months will require a court order (available from your local district court) before the Commission can consider your application.
- The tax clearance certificate submitted as part of a licensing application must match the name on the SPSV licence holder and be an original 'TC2' certificate.
- Insurance certificates must be an original (i.e. not a faxed copy) on the headed paper of the insurance company or broker issuing the policy and must contain details of the vehicle registration of the vehicle being licensed.
- If you transfer your licence onto a different vehicle, and then reverse the transfer within eight weeks (e.g. back on to the original vehicle), you can apply for a refund of the second vehicle transfer fee.

More information on vehicle licensing is available by calling **1890 347 347**

Complaints and Enforcement

The Enforcement Team for the Commission for Taxi Regulation is now fully in place and has been active since February of this year. The team, assisted by An Garda Síochána, cover all aspects of the Small Public Service Vehicle (SPSV) industry including; vehicle standards, vehicle licensing and driver licensing. Under Section 51 of the 2003 Taxi Regulation Act, the Commission for Taxi Regulation is also responsible for investigating complaints in relation to the following:

- Complaints in relation to the condition and cleanliness of the vehicle
- Complaints in relation to the conduct and behaviour of a SPSV operator or driver
- Overcharging or other matters relating to fares
- Matters relating to the hiring of a SPSV

Since February, officers have visited more than a dozen separate locations across the country. These locations are chosen either in response to calls from within the industry, members of the public or following advice from the Gardaí. The team will continue these visits throughout the year around the country, paying particular attention to special events that draw large attendances and are serviced by large numbers of SPSVs.

The vast majority of the industry operates to very high standards and the enforcement visits bear this out. However, Enforcement Officers have discovered a small number of incidences of non-compliance as a result of investigation of complaints and visits across the country. A number of prosecutions are pending and the Commission has also issued 64 formal warnings and given advice to a number of drivers.

A number of cases have also been transferred to the Gardaí as they either fall outside the remit of the Commission or a Garda investigation takes precedence, for example allegations of assault.

How complaints are handled

All complaints are assessed upon receipt to establish whether they are valid and whether they fall within the remit of the Commission. Some of the complaints received are referred to other agencies for investigation, for example the Gardaí or the Office of Tobacco Control. All complaints are acknowledged.

Once the complaint has been assessed and validated it is passed to an Enforcement Officer who is assigned to investigate the matter. The Enforcement Officer will make contact with the person who is the subject of the complaint. In all cases, the person who is the subject of the complaint will be invited to provide their account of the incident. This is nearly always by way of a formal interview. Having obtained both sides of the incident and gathered any additional information and evidence that might be relevant, a decision is made whether to take the matter to court, issue a formal warning or take no further action.

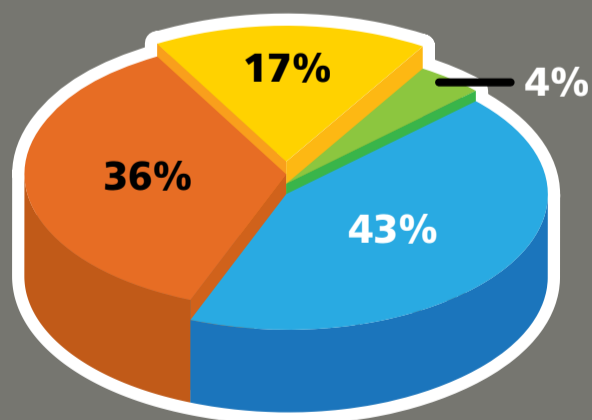
It is important to note that only where evidence is of a sufficient standard will action be taken against an individual. All complainants should be prepared to attend court if necessary to give evidence regarding the incident.

Enforcement Officers may also discover offences during the course of their own work. In such instances, anybody suspected of committing an offence is given the opportunity to present their case. This will normally be within a formal interview setting. Again, evidence is assessed upon the completion of an investigation and the decision taken whether to prosecute, formally warn or take no further action.

Complaints Process in Summary

1	A Section 51 complaint form must be submitted in writing to the Commission. These are available from www.taxiregulator.ie or by request from the Consumer Information Line on 1890 60 60 90. Anonymous complaints or complaints made by third parties cannot be processed.
2	Upon receipt of a fully completed complaint form, an acknowledgement letter will be sent and the Enforcement Team will investigate the incident.
3	The Enforcement Team will invite all relevant witnesses to provide a statement of the events. An investigation will then assess evidence provided by all parties in a disputed situation.
4	Once this evidence has been collected and evaluated, a decision will be made as to how to proceed with the complaint.
5	The complaint may be concluded in one of three ways. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No further action ■ A formal warning ■ Prosecution in court

Complaints received and processed to date this year



- 4% Condition and Cleanliness of the Vehicle
- 43% Conduct and behaviour of a SPSV Operator or Driver
- 36% Overcharging or other matters relating to fares
- 17% Matters relating to the hiring of an SPSV

Source: Commission for Taxi Regulation



Commissioner for Taxi Regulation

Kathleen Doyle has been appointed Commissioner for Taxi Regulation on a permanent basis following a public recruitment process. Kathleen Doyle was previously Director of Operations at the Commission for Taxi Regulation. As Director of Operations, a position held since April 2005, she was responsible for the daily and operational management of the Commission and its staff. Ms Doyle and the Commission will continue with the implementation of the Action Plan 'Driving Forward'.

Displaying Driver ID

- You should ensure that your Driver ID is displayed prominently on the dashboard of your car so that it can be seen clearly from the front of your vehicle, but also by passengers. The side displaying the area in which you are licensed to operate should face outwards leaving the side displaying your name, picture and licence number facing the customer inside the vehicle.
- New licence holders should note that due to the requirement for transfer of documentation from the Gardaí to the Commission, there will be a waiting period of approximately two weeks between a renewal or issue of a new licence and arrangement of the collection of your Driver ID.

Driver Licensing

The distribution of Driver ID cards is now nearing completion, with the final round of collection dates scheduled to end in June. The collection of 41,000 licences and subsequent creation of the new secure driver identification began late last year and distribution commenced with Carlow and Kildare at the beginning of February.

The Commission is working closely with An Garda Síochána to ensure regular updates are provided to the Commission on renewals or new licences granted, so the Commission in turn can arrange for the distribution of Driver ID packs as soon as possible to newly licensed drivers as well as drivers who have renewed their licence.

If you have not received your Driver ID card yet please contact the Industry information line on **1890 347 347**.

The Commission is also reviewing two key areas this year in relation to overall driver licensing:

1. *The overall administration of the driver licensing process; with a view to transferring the current system from An Garda Síochána to a national licensing system under the auspices of the Commission for Taxi Regulation.*
2. *Driver skills development programme; The Commission will be commissioning a training provider to design an appropriate course to support the roll-out of a driver skills development programme from 2008 onwards.*

Guide Dogs

The Commission continues to work towards improving accessibility within the industry. The carriage of guide and assistance dogs is a matter of particular importance and drivers are reminded of their obligations in such circumstances.

It is an offence for SPSV drivers to refuse to carry in their vehicle a guide or assistance dog accompanying a person with disabilities.

SPSV drivers who are medically unfit to carry a guide dog in their vehicle are obliged, in advance of any refusal to carry a guide or assistance dog, to provide the Commission with a valid medical certificate to that effect.

The Commission is advised that many SPSV drivers provide excellent levels of assistance to persons with disabilities. The Commission is anxious to support and promote this general practice. Our proposals in relation to future quality service certification will help to acknowledge the provision of an accessible SPSV service by certain operators.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How long does it take to process an application for restoration of a lapsed licence?

A: Once the Commission has received the relevant application form, and if all the relevant information has been supplied, it usually takes 2-3 working days to process the restoration form. The licence holder is notified as quickly as possible in writing when restoration has occurred, so they can visit their local NCTS centre to renew their licence.

Q: Does the Commission have any involvement in the booking of NCTS vehicle tests for the purposes of SPSV licensing?

A: No – any vehicle testing conducted by the NCTS for small public service vehicles is contracted directly by the Department of Transport. The Commission requires a valid NCTS certificate prior to issue or renewal of a SPSV vehicle licence, similar to the requirement for a tax clearance certificate and insurance certificate.

Any queries relating to the booking of vehicle tests or re-tests should be made directly to the NCTS dedicated SPSV phone line – 1890 927 977. Licence holders should advise the NCTS agent during their call of the expiry date of their SPSV licence when booking a NCTS test.

Q: Why do some SPSVs not have their tamper-proof disc displayed? Are they operating illegally?

A: A number of local authorities continued to issue licences during summer 2006 (the last local authority licences would have been issued by Dublin City Council up until October 2006). As a result there are a number of licence holders who will not renew their licence under the national licensing system until October 2007, and therefore will not be supplied with tamper-proof discs until then.

If you do have a concern about illegal operators, you can contact the Industry Information Line on 1890 347 347 who will pass on the details to the Commission's enforcement team for appropriate investigation.

Q: When renewing my hackney vehicle licence do I need to keep my plate affixed to the rear of the vehicle?

A: No you do not. The new five digit number on your tamper-proof disc is your new identification number. It replaces the system of vehicle identification by the plate affixed to the rear of the vehicle.

Upon renewal of a vehicle licence both hackney and limousine licence holders have a tamper-proof disc affixed to the windscreen and rear window so you need to remove the plate from your hackney. The same is applicable to limousine vehicles.

Reminders to Drivers

In response to queries or comments from consumers received through the Consumer Information Line can we please remind all drivers of the following:

- Turn off your roof-sign light if your vehicle is not for hire or already engaged.
- When you are standing or plying for hire in the street or at a transport terminal you cannot refuse to take a passenger wishing to travel up to 30 kilometres.
- A booking charge can only be applied at a transport terminal where the journey was booked in advance.
- No journey is complete without a receipt, it is now mandatory for taxis to provide a printed receipt, or in the case of hackneys and limousines, a written receipt.