

PROGRESSING REFORM IN THE SPSV INDUSTRY

The Commission for Taxi Regulation has announced the next stage of reforms for the Small Public Service Vehicle industry following the most recent public consultation process.

This newsletter is the first of a series of industry communications to inform on the roll-out of changes. Licence holders will be contacted on an individual basis to provide a reasonable notice period to prepare for any licensing changes that effect their particular licence. More detail on the reforms will also be included in the Commission's strategy statement and action plan, due for publication in 2010. Public consultation on the Commission's strategy statement is currently open.

Since 2005, the Commission has been tasked with transforming a recently deregulated industry to achieve a first class, professional, efficient, safe and accessible, customer-friendly service for small public service vehicle passengers and service providers. The Commission acknowledges that many operators already meet this objective; however, reform is required to ensure that all operators meet it. This not only ensures a level playing field for operators, but also clearly benefits the consumer.

To meet this objective, the Commission has to consider the measures that are available within its remit. We must focus on raising standards through regulation, licensing and enforcement, taking into account that the industry

now operates within a free market. The latest reforms are aimed specifically at continuing to improve the standard of the fleet and the knowledge of those operating in it.

The reforms announced look to build on the previous success and immediately address a number of key concerns. Foremost amongst these is that the SPSV fleet meets its accessibility objectives. The Commission believes that there is a need to increase the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles and improve the availability of those already licensed to provide a service. The Commission has taken decisive action to address this by bringing in a period of issuing Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Licences only, along with a number of initiatives aimed at better matching supply and demand in the sector.

Further to this, we are bringing in a number of measures that will increase standards and compliance within the industry, including fast tracking of vehicle standards to ensure uniformity by 2011 and the driver skills development programme to enhance knowledge by 2012. New regulations in relation to transferability of taxi licences between taxi operators and new requirements for those applying for, and renewing, licences will increase accountability and compliance.

We firmly believe that at the conclusion of this reform period that Ireland will have an SPSV fleet it can be proud of and that consumers and the industry will greatly benefit.



November to December 2009

(See page 3)

- Renewal reminder process updated to advise of changes to vehicle licensing from 4th January 2010.
- Final period to renew licences through NCTS test centre network.

January to March 2010

(See pages 2 & 3)

- Vehicle licensing moves to a new network of dedicated SPSV inspection centres.
- Final period to transfer or purchase new licences under existing rules.
- Action Plan issued for 2010–2011.

April 2010

(See page 3)

- New licences issued to wheelchair accessible vehicles only.
- Transferability rules commence.
- Nine year age rule introduced as licence holders change their vehicle.

New licences only available for wheelchair accessible & limousine categories

What does this mean?

The Commission is giving the industry three months notice before the issuing of wheelchair accessible taxi and hackney licences only.

All conditional offers made before then must be completed by 31st March 2010. For example, a conditional offer made on 15th March will only have 17 days to complete the application.

From 6th April 2010 the Commission will issue only new wheelchair accessible taxi and hackney licences. In order to differentiate these licences (and their standards) the first licence issued after 6th April 2010 will be 47,001. The Commission will continue to issue limousine licences.

All current wheelchair accessible licences will not be subject to any additional suitability standards until their renewal during 2012. Licence holders will be notified in advance of the roll-out of these requirements

Take a break... it's the law

The Commission have run a joint campaign with the Road Safety Authority in highlighting the dangers of Driver Fatigue. The campaign consisted of press advertising in all of the national newspapers and a radio advertisement that aired on local and national stations. The purpose of the campaign was to highlight the fact that all professional taxi, hackney and limousine drivers must not drive more than 11 hours over three consecutive days. Driver Fatigue is a serious issue and if you are feeling in any way tired as a professional driver, you need to take a break. For further information on this subject please refer to www.rsa.ie and click on the link 'Driver Fatigue – the facts'.

Summary of reforms for vehicle licensing

When are the reforms coming in?

A number of changes are being made to the vehicle licensing process from January 2010 onwards. The main change will be the move of the current contract for vehicle licensing administration from NCTS Ireland to SGS Ireland Limited. To minimise the impact of the changeover the Commission will roll-out the revised vehicle licensing standards in three stages:

Stage 1 – Drafting and notification Nov–Dec 2009

- ▶ Final regulations drafted.
- ▶ Licence holders notified of upcoming changes.

Stage 2 – Notice period for licence holders/change in service network Jan–March 2010

- ▶ For the first three months of 2010, existing licensing rules and requirements will remain largely the same.
- ▶ Licence holders will be advised through reminder and other information means of the steps to complete before 31st March 2010.

Stage 3 – New rules apply/licensing processes change April 2010

- ▶ From 6th April 2010, vehicle licensing processes will change with immediate effect to reflect the reforms.

Transferring licences – no more transferring of wheelchair accessible licences and one more transfer only for standard taxi licences

What does this mean?

- ▶ From 6th April 2010 all wheelchair accessible taxi licences will no longer be transferable and standard taxi licences may only be transferred one more time. Hackney and limousine licences remain non-transferable.

- ▶ From April 2010, if you transfer the ownership of your licence the vehicle associated with that licence must be under three years old, including licences and vehicles sold as a 'package'.

The vehicle does not have to meet the additional size/luggage capacity standards until renewal during 2012.

- ▶ Any licence issued after 6th April 2010 will be non-transferable. These licences will be identifiable by being numbered above 47,000. The first licence issued after 6th April 2010 will be 47,001. Standard taxis under 47,000 will have one more transfer.

- ▶ Licence transfers continue under the current rules until 31st March 2010. No transfers made between now and then affect your right to one more transfer of a taxi licence after 6th April 2010.

- ▶ From January 2010 there will no longer be a walk-in service for the validation of documents for transfer-of-ownership transactions. To transfer ownership of your licence you must do so by post. If a vehicle inspection is required, a separate booking will be made for the inspection and issue of tamper-proof discs.

Taxi and hackney change of vehicle – vehicle must meet nine year rule

What does this mean?

- ▶ At 2011 renewal ALL standard taxis and hackneys must be under nine years of age. At 2012 renewal ALL standard taxis and hackneys must also comply with the vehicle size requirements (as now in force for taxi and hackney licences above 45,000).
- ▶ Any vehicles involved in a change-of-vehicle transaction for a hackney or taxi licence must meet the nine-year age rule from 6th April 2010 and at every subsequent renewal.
- ▶ Vehicles still require the Initial Suitability Inspection.
- ▶ For licences under 45,000 no additional vehicle size criteria apply until renewal during 2012.
- ▶ This age rule does not apply to limousines or wheelchair accessible vehicles.

How do I calculate the age of my vehicle?

The principle is the same as calculating someone's age using the date of the vehicle's first registration as the date of birth. The vehicle must be under nine years old on the day it is licensed.

Example: Assuming date of renewal is 25-01-2010.

Date of first registration	15-01-2001	30-01-2001
Accepted for use as Taxi or Hackney	NO: 9 years and 10 days	YES: 8 years, 11 months and 26 days*

*Please note that the vehicle registered on 30-01-2001 would not meet the licensing conditions for any subsequent renewal as it would be over nine years old

New enhanced vehicle licensing service

From 4th January, the Commission's vehicle licensing service will be operated by SGS Ireland Ltd. from a new network of 37 dedicated SPSV inspection centres. This move results from the re-tendering of the service by the Commission in mid-2009.

The benefits of a dedicated network for vehicle licensing on its own are:

- ▶ Dedicated inspectors who are expert in all aspects of vehicle licensing rules and procedures
- ▶ A more streamlined application process which will be built on:
 - ▶ A more simplified licensing process
 - ▶ An appointment-led service including set times with appointments for licensing services guaranteed
 - ▶ Enhanced customer information.

Licence renewal fees will remain at 2009 levels for a transitional period. The Commission is reviewing all fees in 2010 to accommodate the impact of the new reforms on its services and will be notifying licence holders of any changes at a later date.

A number of changes to the licensing process will be rolled-out as part of this new service, including the introduction of an annual Licence Renewal Assessment. Please note that the NCT roadworthiness test certificate will continue to be issued by the NCTS test centre network.

Operators renewing from 4th January onwards should ensure that they leave sufficient time to book and pass the NCT roadworthiness test to avail of the continuing 12 week advance renewal process for their vehicle licence.

Please read your next reminder letter carefully which will provide full details of the on-going service improvements as well as changes to the licensing rules from January 2010.

If you wish to receive more detailed information of the changes as they happen you can ring 1890 347 347 with any queries, or visit our website at www.taxiregulator.ie

**From
4th January
2010**

New network of 37 dedicated SPSV inspection centres

Arklow
Athlone
Ballina
Cahir
Carlow
Carrick-on-Shannon
Cavan

Charleville
Cork
Deansgrange
Donegal
Drogheda
Dundalk

Ennis
Enniscorthy
Finglas
Fonthill
Galway

Killarney
Kilkenny
Letterkenny
Limerick
Longford
Macroom

Monaghan
Mullingar
Naas
Navan
Nenagh
Portlaoise
Roscommon

Sligo
Tralee
Tullamore
Waterford
Wexford
Youghal

Changes to vehicle licensing services

Until December 23rd 2009¹

To arrange your licence renewal contact the dedicated NCTS SPSV Licensing number on 1890 347 347 in usual. Please remember to have your possession the following details when contacting NCTS:

- Your vehicle registration details
- Your current SPSV licence containing the licence number and category (taxi, hackney etc.)
- Your current expiry date

Until December 23rd 2009, all SPSV licensing services will continue to be carried out in the current network of NCTS centres. For further information on the location of these centres call 1890 347 347 or go to www.ncts.ie

After January 4th 2010

There is no change to the booking number and January bookings will be taken from December onwards. To book your licence renewal you will need to contact the booking line on 1890 347 347. Payment to renew a licence will be required in advance. When booking you will simply need to provide your vehicle licence number and credit or debit card details.

From January onwards the service will be administered by SGS Ireland through a new dedicated network of 37 inspection and vehicle licensing centres (please see back of this paper for a map of centre locations).

Renewing with current vehicle

NCT roadworthiness test

There are no additional requirements beyond passing your NCT roadworthiness test.

Changing vehicle at renewal?

You will have to carry out a change of vehicle as part of which you receive a 12-month licence from the date it's issued. Your inspection will take place at the same time as your licence renewal. For further information on the location of these centres call 1890 347 347 or go to www.ncts.ie

Renewing with current vehicle

A Licence Renewal Assessment will be carried out as part of the renewal process. This will be a professionally visual condition check along with accessible parts and the mandatory safety equipment in all vehicles etc. This will be done on an advisory basis initially but passing the assessment on renewal will become a condition of licensing from April 2010.

Changing vehicle at renewal?

You will still have to carry out a change of vehicle as part of which you will receive a 12-month licence from the date it's issued. Your new inspection will take place at the same time as your licence renewal. For further information call 1890 347 347.

You will still require an NCT roadworthiness certificate for the vehicle associated with the licence issued less than 90 days before the renewal date. You will need to visit a NCTS test centre for this.

The NCT roadworthiness test needs to be carried out separately and in advance of the vehicle licence renewal. You should call 1890 412 413 for NCT booking information for annual roadworthiness test appointments. The documents required will remain the same but details of how you should present these documents will be explained in full at the time of booking.

From January 2010 the renewal fee will remain at €125 (provided the licence has not expired). Payment will be required at the time of booking and will be accepted by debit or credit card only. This assessment will be on an advisory basis until April 2010.

From April 2010 passing the Licence Renewal Assessment will become a condition of licensing. The Commission will be reviewing all its licensing fees in early 2010 so the fee is subject to change. All fee changes will be notified in advance to licence holders in writing.

When will the reforms affect me?

In October 2009 the Commission announced a number of reforms to vehicle licensing. Licence holders will be contacted in early 2010 in advance of any reforms being introduced.

Further information on the new vehicle licensing service is available from the Commission website at www.taxiregulator.ie or by phoning the Commission's industry assistance line on call 1890 347 347

¹ Note NCTS centres are closed for Christmas from 23rd Dec 2009 to 4th Jan 2010

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Changes to vehicle licensing services

The current operator of the SPSV licensing administration service, will be moving its centre network to a new network of 37 dedicated centres. The locations of these centres will be provided at the time of booking.

Inspection Centres

This leaflet will be distributed with all reminder letters from 30th November. It will also be updated regularly.

Facts and figures

Tables are correct as of 01 November 2009

Active driver licences

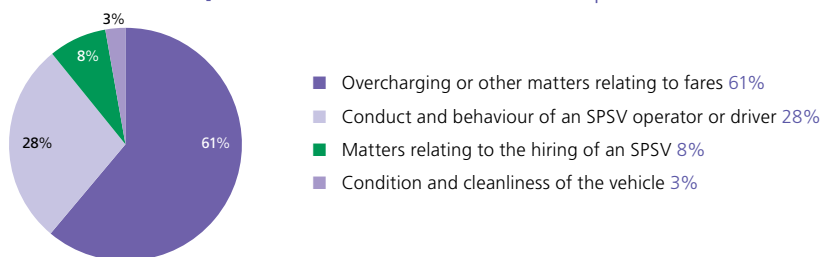
47,323

Vehicle licences by county and category*

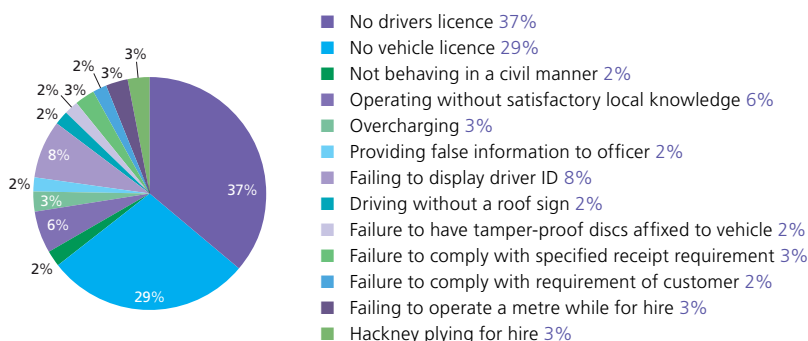
County	Hackney	Limousine	Taxi	Wheelchair	Total
County Carlow	51	3	98	27	179
County Cavan	107	3	101	15	226
County Clare	219	42	206	17	484
County Cork	695	165	1,437	107	2,404
County Donegal	324	20	209	26	579
County Dublin	220	392	11,690	693	12,995
County Galway	370	55	713	78	1216
County Kerry	222	80	233	21	556
County Kildare	275	84	738	97	1,194
County Kilkenny	60	11	166	28	265
County Laois	87	7	159	41	294
County Leitrim	59	6	31	16	112
County Limerick	199	60	618	39	916
County Longford	32	3	75	14	124
County Louth	131	41	520	47	739
County Mayo	209	28	191	23	451
County Meath	160	63	1,135	85	1,443
County Monaghan	110	10	6	9	135
County Offaly	135	17	76	19	247
County Roscommon	123	10	38	10	181
County Sligo	39	22	143	16	220
County Tipperary	314	34	38	4	390
County Waterford	77	51	223	30	381
County Westmeath	58	20	279	44	401
County Wexford	181	40	149	34	404
County Wicklow	148	58	287	30	523
Total	4,605	1,325	19,559	1,570	27,059

*Vehicle licences per county are calculated on the basis of where a licence is issued.

Breakdown of complaints 2009 | Total of 407 complaints



Breakdown of prosecutions 2009 | Total of 63 offences



Fixed-charge penalties 2009

Offence	Number
Standing for hire at a place other than an appointed stand	96
Plying/standing for hire in a hackney/limousine	12
Failure to comply with regulations in relation to the fitting/operation of a taximeter	8
Failing to operate a taximeter	34
Failing to provide a receipt	13
Not having adequate knowledge of local area	39
Failure to display tamper-proof disc	1
Standing for hire at an appointed stand when the vehicle is not available for hire	3
Failure to have taximeter properly calibrated	30
Refusal to carry a passenger for a journey of not more than 30km	3
Refusal to carry an assistance dog or guide dog	2
Applying a booking fee	1
Failure to display driver identification	43
Failure to display in-vehicle information	17
Failure to comply with roof sign requirements	12
Causing the taximeter to operate while standing or plying for hire	1
Forged identification	1
Total	316

Breakdown of prosecutions by area

County and category	Number
County Carlow	1
County Cavan	3
County Clare	1
County Cork	6
County Donegal	3
County Dublin	22
Dublin Airport	5
County Kerry	1
County Kilkenny	1
County Laois	1
County Louth	6
County Limerick	4
County Meath	2
County Monaghan	3
County Tipperary	1
County Wexford	1
Total	61