

Economic Review Complete

The Economic Review of the Small Public Service Vehicle industry carried out by Goodbody Economic Consultants has now been completed.

Goodbody were instructed to undertake a review by the Commission last year in order to provide information to the Commission on trends in a number of areas, including supply and demand, earnings, working hours and the impact of liberalisation, regulation and reform and how the provision of services are made available to consumers. The Commission will use these findings to help inform policy in coming years.

As could be expected, the findings of the review show an industry in transition, highlighting significant changes since liberalisation in 2000. A brief summary of the main findings follows:

Industry Profile

- » *The SPSV industry was valued at €1.5 billion in 2008.*
- » *Approximately 100 million trips were taken nationwide, an increase in demand of over one quarter since 2005.*
- » *It is estimated that approximately 40 per cent of taxis and hackneys nationwide are affiliated to a dispatch operator.*
- » *There was a large increase in the numbers of taxis following liberalisation, the rate of increase has steadied over time with the end of 2008 and start of 2009 showing signs of a steady decrease in applications for new licences.*

Supply and Demand

- » *Waiting times for consumers have reduced since 2005.*
- » *In Dublin, from 2001 to 2008, the proportion of cabs arranged by telephone has increased from 38 per cent to 58 per cent with street hires falling from 62 per cent to 42 per cent in the same period. Nationally, 63 per cent of hires are by phone, and 37 per cent are street hires.*
- » *The demand for SPSV services is a peaked demand with Fridays and Saturdays accounting for 73 per cent of all trips.*
- » *Use of SPSV services by people with disabilities is lower than that of the general population and has decreased since 2005.*

Earnings and hours

- » *Overall, drivers are working longer hours than in 2005, with an average 52-hour week.*
- » *Estimated earnings vary considerably, best analysis suggests that average earnings have dropped, although not dramatically. It is clear that there are operators at both ends of a wide scale.*

- » *Greater access to information on the level of reward of working in the industry will be of benefit to those considering entry.*

Impact of Liberalisation and Reform

- » *There has been significant increases in SPSV use and SPSV provision.*
- » *The market is highly competitive, this offers great benefits to consumers, but challenges to operators.*
- » *The quality of service offered is improving.*
- » *The current profile of the industry is in line with expectations related to a period of regulatory reform.*

Recommendations

- » *There is no economic justification for a moratorium on licences.*
- » *The current regulatory structure is the most appropriate and successful model and should be continued.*
- » *Further improvement of standards should be pursued with fast-tracking of their implementation considered.*
- » *Quality and innovative service should be rewarded.*
- » *Greater provision of service for people with disabilities should be sought.*

The Commission has this week presented the report to the Advisory Council, provided copies of the review to the Minister for Transport, a number of the industry representative bodies and other key stakeholders.

As with all major reviews undertaken by the Commission, before any changes to standards or regulations are introduced, there will be a period of consultation and the Commission will meet with stakeholders, including representative bodies around the country.

A copy of the report is available from the Commission for Taxi Regulation on request by calling the Industry Information Line on 1890 347 347 or by download from www.taxiregulator.ie

Taxi Regulator
An Rialálaí Tacsaithe



Commission for
Taxi Regulation

An Coimisiún Um
Rialáil Tacsaithe

Industry NEWS

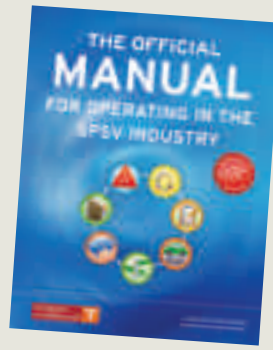
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Skills Development Programme

Operators will be aware that the Commission is currently developing a mandatory Skills Development Programme.

The programme will initially apply to all new entrants and dispatch operator owners/operational managers. This programme will replace the current Garda test required for an SPSV driver licence. The programme content, manual and a DVD with the full programme will be made available by the Commission.



The Commission is currently agreeing with the Gardaí a date from when they will discontinue their area knowledge test, the national rollout of the scheme is scheduled for early summer where it will initially apply to all new market entrants and dispatch operator owners/managers.

The programme will include:

- » *Relevant legislation.*
- » *Route selection and area knowledge.**
- » *Customer care training.*
- » *Fares and charges.*
- » *Health and safety.*
- » *Safety and security.*
- » *Manual handling and lifting.*
- » *Good driving practice.*
- » *Equality and diversity training.*
- » *Disability awareness.*
- » *Knowledge of in-vehicle operational equipment.*
- » *Opportunities to innovate.*

***Note:** Existing drivers will be exempt from the route selection and area knowledge in relation to the area for which their current licence is issued.

Lights on in Daytime

The Road Safety Authority (RSA) is currently running a campaign promoting the use of dipped headlights during the daytime. The RSA has asked the Commission to pass on this advice to all SPSV drivers as they spend large amounts of time on the road.

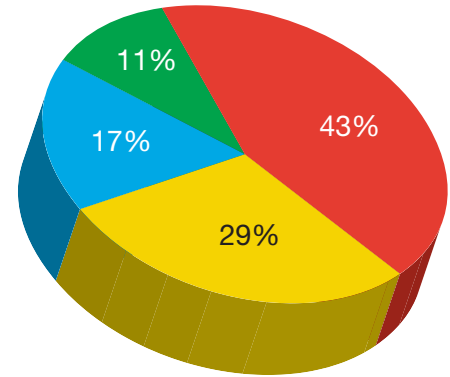
Dipped headlights improve visibility for you and other drivers, make it easier to identify vehicles in the distance and is especially effective in preventing head-on and front-corner collisions. The RSA is also making drivers aware that fog lights should only be used when conditions demand it and should be turned off once the road conditions change.

Further information on this initiative can be found on the RSA website, www.rsa.ie

Enforcement Update

In the course of 2008, the Commission received a total of 601 complaints, around 100 less than 2007.

The breakdown of complaints is as follows:



- Overcharging or other matters relating to fares.
- Conduct and behaviour of an SPSV operator or driver.
- Matters relating to the hiring of an SPSV.
- Condition and cleanliness of the vehicle.

Our belief is that the vast majority of the industry operates to very high standards; however, the Commission will continue to work hard in 2009 to ensure that all operators meet the required standards and that those who don't are penalised.

As a result of the Commission's enforcement activity, 258 fixed charge penalties were issued in 2008. Enforcement visits and the complaints process resulted in 106 prosecutions in 2008; this figure is around four times higher than the previous year and underlines the Commission's commitment to enforcement. Joint enforcement operations with An Garda Síochána are also set to continue this year with a planned schedule of joint activity to be undertaken nationally.

A total of 27 complaints received were referred to other agencies as the nature of the complaint was not within the remit of the Commission.

Update: compliance with Legal Metrology regulations – meter verification

In a recent meeting with Legal Metrology Service, the issue of non-compliance with the meter verification process was raised. The majority of operators have already had their meters verified and are now fully compliant. However, a number of operators at the time of writing have not yet made an appointment with the Legal Metrology Service's verification process to have their meters verified and resealed after the revision to the national maximum taxi fare in November 2008.

Given the time which has passed since the introduction of the revised national maximum taxi fare, the Legal Metrology Service is now taking steps to ensure that full compliance with its regulations is in place, including inspections and detections of non-compliance. Steps are currently being taken to prosecute parties who have failed to take the necessary steps to have their meters verified.

To arrange a booking for meter verification and re-sealing you can contact SGS Ireland, the company responsible for conducting the verification service on behalf of the Legal Metrology Service, at LoCall 1890 886 228, or visit www.verification.ie

Vehicle Standards

The 1st January 2009 saw the introduction of two new requirements. The first requirement affects ALL SPSV drivers who are now required to carry the following safety items in their vehicle:

- » *A Fire Extinguisher which should be securely fitted into luggage compartment or under the driver's seat for MPV style vehicles. Only one 2kg extinguisher is acceptable and it must be marked compliant with 'EN3'.*
- » *A First Aid Kit: Only 'DIN 13164' or Health & Safety Authority 'travel kit' is acceptable.*
- » *An Advance Warning Triangle which must be marked compliant with ECE Regulation 27.*
- » *A High Visibility Reflective Safety Vest which must be marked compliant with EN471 or ANSI/ISEA 107.*
- » *A Torch.*
- » *Pen (or pencil) and Paper.*

The second requirement affects only those applying for NEW taxi or hackney licences. This means anyone with a licence number over 45,000 must have a vehicle:

- » *Less than nine years old.*
- » *With a luggage capacity of at least 420 litres.*
- » *With a rear shoulder width of at least 1,360mm.*

The age of the vehicle is calculated from the date of receipt of the application form and the date of first registration of the vehicle as given in the Vehicle Registration Certificate and irrespective of the country of first registration.

A large number of popular vehicles have been 'pre-assessed' for interior size and luggage capacity. A Model Report database shows Pass/Fail criteria for these listed by manufacturer and is available in the 'For Industry – Vehicle Licensing' section of the Commission website. Please note that this is being constantly updated.

Tax Clearance Certificates

Operators are reminded that in order to obtain or renew a vehicle licence, a valid Tax Clearance Certificate is required.

This means it must be up-to-date, original (not a photocopy) and the name on the certificate must match the name on the Vehicle Licence. Please ensure you leave enough time to source your tax clearance certificate before the renewal date for your licence.

New Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Register

The Commission has created a register of all Wheelchair Accessible Taxis throughout the country. This is to enable improved access to this specialised service for people with disabilities.

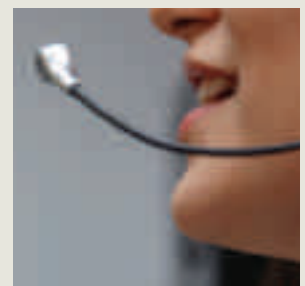
Anyone can now call the Consumer Information line on 1890 60 60 90 and request contact information for a Wheelchair Accessible Taxi service that operates within their area.

The Disability Federation of Ireland has been informed about this service and they in turn are informing various disability groups.

Dispatch Operator Registration Reminder

Dispatch operators are reminded that they are now required to register with the Commission.

Any operator who still has not registered should do so immediately by contacting the Commission on 1890 347 347 or downloading the form from www.taxiregulator.ie



Advertising

The Commission's regulations permit advertising on or in taxis, although they are not permitted to advertise on roof signs.

Under SPSV Regulations, a roof sign is permitted to display the name and contact details of the taxi, wheelchair accessible taxi or dispatch operator as appropriate. A taxi is also permitted to display the name of an industry representative body. Hackneys and Limousines are prohibited from showing any sign, advertisement, or notice (other than signage prescribed by the Commission).

The Alcohol Marketing Communications Monitoring Body was set up by the Department of Health to monitor alcohol marketing in Ireland. The Body has requested that the Commission inform all taxi licence holders of their 'outdoor code', which includes advertising on taxis. The code prescribes that there be no alcohol related 'wrap rounds' allowed on taxis and that 'only one display of alcohol advertising is allowed to be carried on the exterior of any taxi.'



Your Questions Answered

Q What is the timeframe for renewing my vehicle licence?

A: A licence holder can renew their licence up to 12 weeks in advance of their expiry date. The new licence will be valid for a full 12 months from the original expiry date so early renewal will not lose time on your licence. If however a change of vehicle is completed prior to the expiry date a 12-month licence will be issued from the date the transfer is completed.

Q What type of vehicle licence is transferable?

A: Under current regulations, the Commission for Taxi Regulation can transfer a Taxi or Wheelchair Accessible Taxi vehicle licence between individuals. Hackney and Limousine licenses are non transferrable.

Q What is the penalty for not having the correct safety equipment?

A: This offence attracts a maximum fine of €2,000.

Q Is a space saver spare wheel ok for the suitability inspection?

A: No, a full size spare wheel and associated tools to change it are still required.

Q Does the nine-year age limit apply to wheelchair accessible taxis as well?

A: No, there are no age limit requirements for limousines or wheelchair accessible taxis.

Q What do I do if my identity cards are stolen or lost?

A: Your identity cards are very important documents and their theft/loss should be reported immediately to your local PSV office.

Once reported a DL4 form must be filled in and returned to the Commission along with a payment of €25 to replace the cards. The form, which must be completed in duplicate is available in Garda Stations or directly from the Commission. Please note you must have it signed and stamped by your local PSV office. Once complete please return it to the PO Box address on the form and retain the second copy in case you are requested to produce your identification by a member of the enforcement team or An Garda Síochána.

If you have any queries on this, please call the Commission on 1890 347 347.

Q When will new wheelchair accessible taxi standards be introduced?

A: There is currently no date for the introduction of new wheelchair accessible vehicle standards as no decision has yet been made by the Minister for Transport with regard to a possible subsidy for the purchase of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Q When will there be an annual suitability test?

A: The introduction of an annual Licence Renewal Assessment will be January 2010.

Q Does a new car need an NCT roadworthiness test as well as a suitability inspection?

A: Yes, all vehicles seeking licensing as SPSVs require an NCT roadworthiness certificate.

Q When a vehicle licence holder requires a replacement licence or tamper-proof disc, what documents are required?

A: When requesting a duplicate licence or tamper-proof disc, a valid original tax clearance certificate as well as a valid original insurance certificate must be produced in order for the duplicate to be processed.

For further information on any matter relating to SPSVs please contact:

Commission for Taxi Regulation
35 Fitzwilliam Square
Dublin 2
Telephone: 1890 347 347
Website: www.taxiregulator.ie
Email: commission@taxiregulator.ie

