

DRIVERS HANDBOOK

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NRA

National Rivers Authority

Guardians of
the Water Environment



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INTRODUCTION

Dear colleague,

Your duties require that you drive an Authority vehicle.

You may see this vehicle simply as a means of getting yourself and your equipment from job to job.

For many of the public the only contact they will have with the Authority is to see our vehicles on the road. The condition of the vehicle and the manner in which it is driven will reflect in their minds the Authority itself.

We would all want our image as 'Guardians of the water environment' to extend to all aspects of our activities. We must represent the Authority and ourselves in the best possible manner. This is particularly important when driving an Authority vehicle.

This booklet does not set out to be a guide to the Law of the Road. It outlines the Authority's expectations of you as a driver, gives some hints on what to do in certain circumstances and goes into some detail on frequently needed legislation.

Hopefully you will find it useful but you should not consider it as a substitute for a thorough and regularly updated knowledge of the Highway Code.

This booklet is produced for circulation to all drivers throughout the Authority. Your Region may well issue additional instructions and these may be more stringent than either the legal requirements or the advice offered in this booklet. Regional instructions will always take precedence.



John Wheatley
Chief Executive

DRIVERS LICENCES

Every employee who drives an Authority vehicle must have a licence that covers the type of vehicle involved. As your employer the Authority has a responsibility in law to ensure that this is the case.

Each Region will have a system for checking licences and may even issue its own Permits to Drive. This might include a registration scheme for the drivers of tractors and mobile plant.

If you are asked to produce your licence or other relevant documents, it is not a case of your manager being nosy! He is ensuring that both you and he are meeting the statutory requirements.

LICENCE ENDORSEMENTS AND REVOCATION

If, in the course of your duties, you have any involvement with the police, the Ministry of Transport or any other statutory body (even if this is only a routine check) you must inform your supervisor. You must always provide details of any endorsements made to your licence even if the incident leading to the endorsement was outside of working hours. This requirement to report endorsements applies irrespective of whether you were driving an Authority vehicle at the time. If you have your licence suspended, it may well mean that you cannot undertake the duties for which you were employed. The Authority makes no undertaking to find you alternative employment and you risk dismissal. The possibility of this happening to you can be easily avoided:

- Make sure that your vehicle is safe and legal by carrying out the Daily Checks.
- Drive with consideration for other road users.
- Drive defensively and avoid accidents.
- Keep to the speed limits.
- Do not overload your vehicle.
- Never drink and drive.



... drink with responsibility
for drink.....

DRIVERS CHECKS

At the start of the day:

- Check tax disc (and 0 - licence disc when applicable) are visible and current.
- Check tyres for visible damage and deflation.
- Check bodywork for damage. Check lights and indicators for cleanliness and operation. Ensure windows and mirrors are clean.
- Check and replenish coolant, engine oil, brake and clutch hydraulic fluids. If any of these items require regular 'topping- up' then report this to your supervisor or the Transport Department.
- Check level of screenwash reservoir and the operation of washers and wipers. Check horn operation.

When you fill up with fuel:

- Check tyre pressures (including the spare) and ensure that all tyres meet the statutory minimum requirements.

On the road:

- Be aware of any changes in the behaviour of your vehicle. Do not ignore warnings from other road users (eg flashed lights) that something may be amiss with your vehicle.
- Note and report any changes in performance, handling, braking and fuel consumption.

SERVICING

The manufacturer's service record book should remain with each vehicle. Drivers should:-

- Report to supervisor if the vehicle has not been booked in for a service and the mileage or time interval for next service has been exceeded.
- When collecting the vehicle from a garage following a service, ensure the garage has completed the vehicle's service record book.
- When taking a vehicle to a garage, inform the garage of all defects by the reporting system.

SPEED LIMITS

Speed limits are set for both vehicles and roads. The lower limit always applies. The vehicle speed limits that are likely to affect you in the course of your duties are:-

		Motorways	Dual Carriage	Other
Cars, car derived vans and dual purpose vehicles	Solo	70mph	70mph	60mph
	Towing	60mph	60mph	50mph
Rigid goods Vehicles up to 7.5 tonnes gvw	Solo	70mph	60mph	50mph
	Towing	60mph	60mph	50mph
Rigid goods Vehicles over 7.5 tonnes gvw	Solo	60mph	50mph	40mph
	Towing	60mph	50mph	40mph

Agricultural tractors: - In general tractors are limited to 20mph. Certain tractors are now available that meet conditions in respect of wings and springs and these are subject to higher limits. Assume that your tractor is subject to the 20mph limit unless you are advised otherwise.

KEEP TO THE LIMITS - IT'S YOUR LICENCE!



DEFENSIVE DRIVING

Defensive driving does not mean driving at slow speeds in a state of constant anxiety. It means driving your vehicle in such a way that you avoid preventable accidents and avoid contributing to others being involved in accidents.

At all times you should be concentrating on the task in hand, that is, driving. We have all completed journeys and had no recollection of passing through particular villages or areas that we know well. This is because we have allowed our concentration to wander. You should be constantly searching the traffic scene around and as far as possible ahead of you. In this way you can anticipate and assess hazardous situations in time to take the appropriate action without danger to yourself or other road users.

You should be patient with other road users who may not be as skilled, confident or familiar with the road as you are. If you are driving a slow vehicle you should be aware of any hold-up you are causing others and allow them past when it is safe to do so.

You must be ready to adjust your driving to any special hazards presented by abnormal, unusual or changing conditions in the weather, visibility, traffic conditions, the mechanical operation of your vehicle, the road surface, your physical fitness and your state of mind.

You should take pride in your ability to 'make progress' without exceeding any speed limits and without inconveniencing or antagonising any other road user. You should study the Highway Code and keep up-to-date with changes and, above all, you should develop a confidence that accidents are preventable.

When you are a driver, your most important responsibility - to yourself, your employer, your family and to other road users is the responsibility to avoid becoming involved in or contributing to an accident.

DRINK AND DRUGS



You must not drive under the influence of alcohol. Remember that alcohol takes some time to disperse from the bloodstream. It is not unusual for the police to breathalyse drivers early in the morning if they suspect that a driver may still be under the influence of alcohol consumed the previous night.

You must ensure that any medicines you are taking will not affect your driving (ask your doctor).

DRIVING IN FOG

If you encounter fog

- Slow down
- Switch on lights, including headlights. If visibility is seriously reduced, use your rear fog lamps.
- Keep a safe distance from other vehicles.
- Be sure that you can stop within your range of vision.
- Act upon *all* warning signals.
- Make frequent use of washers and wipers.
- Avoid travelling on the tail lights of the vehicle ahead.
- Keep a constant check on your speed.

USE OF VEHICLES

You must not use your vehicle for any unauthorised purpose or carry passengers in your vehicle if their journey is not authorised.

This rule exists for your protection. If a vehicle was involved in an accident whilst being used for an unauthorised journey the Insurance Company and the Authority could refuse to accept liability. The effect of this could be catastrophic to your future and that of your family.

SEATBELTS

You should always wear seatbelts where fitted and ensure that your passengers do likewise. Not only is this a legal requirement but it can also have a significant effect on the level of Personal Injury compensation in the event of an accident.



VEHICLE SECURITY

You should always ensure that your vehicle is locked when unattended. Avoid leaving items that are valuable or 'attractive' in clear sight. If your vehicle must be left in a public place at night then try to leave it under a lamp-post or in clear view. If you have been provided with additional anti-theft or anti-vandal devices then these must be used.

Your vehicle is identifiable as belonging to a statutory organisation. Be suitably suspicious of signs that your vehicle has been tampered with and of packages left under or near it.

USE OF RADIOS AND TELEPHONES.

These recommendations are endorsed by ROSPA and are intended to make driving safer for you, and in particular, other road users.

- Do not make calls while driving a vehicle.
- *Incoming calls* - upon receipt, pull over when safe and legal to do so. Stop before answering, unless a hands free facility is available, or a passenger is able to answer the call.
- A hands free facility should not be used for long complicated calls. Pull over once the call is acknowledged.

General Safety Precautions

- *Refuelling* - users should turn off equipment when at a refuelling point.
- Cellular telephones are not intrinsically safe and must not be used in areas classified as hazardous.
- Do not touch the aerial during transmission (Hand/Transportables).
- Do not operate when anyone is within 20cms (8 inches) of the aerial (Mobile).

TRANSPORTATION OF PETROLEUM SPIRIT

For your own safety you should not carry any more petrol in your vehicle than you have to. The Authority's policy is that not more than 45 litres (10 gallons) in 10 litre (2 gallon) explosafe containers should be carried. Petrol must never be carried in containers not specifically designed for the purpose.

It is recommended that containers are permanently marked; four star; unleaded; or two-stroke, and are only used for the relevant fuel.

Irreversible damage can be caused if leaded petrol is used in vehicles fitted with catalytic converters.

TRANSPORTATION OF LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS (LPG)

If you carry such gases certain regulations apply. In brief these require that you have adequate training in the hazards of such gases and the emergency procedures, that you carry a Transport Emergency Card (tremcard) and have such equipment as stipulated on the tremcard. If you carry more than 500kg of LPG then additional regulations apply including the display of orange plates.

These regulations do not apply if the only cylinder that you carry is part of (ie connected to) equipment carried on the vehicle such as a cooking stove or burning equipment. In such cases you are also allowed to carry a spare cylinder so long as the equipment itself only uses one cylinder.





Irrespective of the quantity carried, certain commonsense precautions must be taken:

- Make sure that there is adequate ventilation (an open vehicle is best).
- Make sure that you know what to do in the event of an emergency - it is useful to have a tremcard even if the law does not require it. Make sure that cylinders are stowed safely and securely.
- Do not smoke if you are carrying cylinders in a vehicle without an airtight bulkhead.
- Make sure that you can get at the fire extinguisher and if you smell gas *do not look for the leak with a lighted match* - soapy water is much safer!

Your Region may have issued Regional Guidelines. These must be followed.

TRANSPORT OF OTHER HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

There are regulations governing the transportation of hazardous substances. The hazard may be due to the substance being volatile, toxic, corrosive, irritant or harmful.

You should ensure that you know whether any substance that you carry is covered by such regulations and that you have received the appropriate training to handle it in a safe, legal and professional manner.

If you are in any doubt seek advice from your supervisor or line manager.

IN THE CASE OF AN ACCIDENT

If you are involved in an accident which causes:

- Injury to anyone other than yourself.
- Injury to an animal (horse, cattle, mule, sheep, pig, goat, dog) not carried in the vehicle.
- Damage to other property on or adjacent to the road.
- Damage to another vehicle.

***You must stop** and if required to do so by a person having reasonable grounds you must:*

- Give your name and address and the name and address of your Regional Headquarters.
- Give the vehicles registration number.
- Produce the insurance certificate (if there is an injury).
If, at this stage, you are unable to produce a certificate of insurance, you will probably be asked to produce it, at a police station of your choice within 7 days.

***You must remain** where the accident occurred for long enough for persons having the right to do so to request this information.*



.....GATHER AS MUCH INFORMATION
AS POSSIBLE.....

If, having stopped, you are unable to complete the above procedure then you must report the accident to any police constable or at any police station as soon as is reasonably practicable and, in any case, within 24 hours. This does not mean that you have 24 hours to report it!

At the scene: If you are physically able you should gather as much information as is possible. This will include:

- Location.
- Names and addresses of other parties involved.
- Details of their insurers.
- Names and addresses of any witnesses.
- Number and station of any police constable in attendance.

It will be helpful if you make a sketch of the accident and note the road conditions etc. Your region may provide a special form.

Do not admit any liability. Try to avoid getting into discussion about the cause of the accident. If you talk to the police, try to ensure that the conversation is private.



Report the accident to your supervisor and complete the insurance claim form as soon as possible.

LOADING OF VEHICLES

Weight: *If you overload your vehicle you cause a danger to yourself and to other road users. If such a vehicle is detected then both you and the Authority are liable to prosecution.*

You must be careful not to exceed the Maximum Permissible Weight or the Individual Axle Weights for your vehicle. Remember that axle loads can alter as the vehicle is unloaded and that the weight of loads such as sand will increase if they become wet during the journey. If you are towing a trailer you must ensure that the trailer itself is not loaded beyond its proper weight limit.

You must also ensure that neither the towing limit for the vehicle nor the gross train weight for the vehicle, plus trailer is exceeded. *If the permitted weight for the vehicle, plus trailer exceeds 7.5 tonnes then you must hold an HGV licence.*

If you are in any doubt about the actual weight of your vehicle or trailer then get it checked at the nearest weighbridge. Let your supervisor or control room know that you are proceeding to a weighbridge as this can constitute a defence if you are stopped and found to be overweight.

IF IN DOUBT - CHECK IT OUT

Height: Height will generally only be a problem to drivers of heavy goods vehicles. Regulations exist that require vehicles that carry loads of variable height eg. Low loaders, Engineering plant, skip loaders and demounts to have a notice in the cab indicating the travelling height whenever this exceeds 3.66m.

If you drive a vehicle or plant item that exceeds this height (even if this is rare) and travels on the highway, then contact your Transport Manager. He will probably supply you with a height indicator meeting the regulations even if your vehicle is not specifically included in the regulations.

If you have a height indicator fitted it is your responsibility to ensure that it is adjusted to your travelling height and to remain aware of this height when travelling under bridges, cables, etc.

Width: Unless you have made special arrangements, the width of your load must not project laterally more than 305mm on either side of your vehicle (or trailer) and the overall width must not exceed 2.9m. If you need to move anything wider than this then contact your Transport Manager.

Length: Loads which project (forwards or rearwards) are subject to certain requirements.

Up to 2m the requirement is simply that they should be clearly visible. Above this there is a need for special marker boards.

The requirements are summarised on page 15, but if you need to move loads with a projection greater than 2m you should first seek advice from your Transport Manager about the policy in your Region.

PROJECTING LOADS

Loads which project forwards or rearwards over certain limits must be fitted with end and/or side marker boards and require an attendant/police notification as follows:

KEY

CV = Clearly visible to other road users eg bright rag etc

EM = End Marker to the approved standard.

SM = Side Marker to the approved standard

ASM = Additional Side Marker

ATT = Attendant Required

PN = Police Notification.

Front/rear marker boards must be fitted vertically not more than 0.5m from the end of the load. They must be clearly visible and the lowest part must be no more than 2.5m from the ground.

Side marker boards must show clearly on either side and the lowest point must be no more than 2.5m from the ground and the nearest point no more than 1m from the end marker.

At night independent lights are required.

	CV	EM	SM	ASM	ATT	PN
Projection rearwards over 1m to 2m	x					
over 2m to 3.05m		x				
over 3.05m to 5m		x	x		x	x
over 5m		x	x	x	x	x
Projection forwards over 1m to 2m	x					
over 2m to 3.05m		x	x		x	
over 3.05m to 4.5m		x	x		x	x
over 4.5m		x	x	x	x	x

SECURITY OF LOADS

It is your responsibility to ensure that your load is secure. Loads within vehicles should be restrained so as not to be a danger in the event of heavy braking. Loads on open backed vehicles, on roof racks and in trailers must be thoroughly lashed down. If you are carrying items that cannot satisfactorily be roped or are liable to be blown off the vehicle (eg paper, hedge-cuttings etc.) then you should use a tarpaulin or net. Roof racks must never be loaded beyond the limits stipulated in the vehicles handbook.

BEACONS AND WORKLIGHTS

Amber rotating beacons should only be used in the following circumstances:

- When your vehicle is causing an unavoidable obstruction to the highway whilst you carry out your duties (getting the newspaper doesn't count!).
- When you are towing another vehicle which has broken down.
- When you are driving a slow moving vehicle on a dual-carriageway (mandatory).

The hazard warning lights fitted to your vehicle must only be used when stationary. Contrary to popular belief they do not give you any right to park on 'double yellows'.

If you have work lights fitted they must only be used whilst the vehicle is stationary. If they must be used whilst the vehicle is on or adjacent to the highway then they must only be operated whilst the rotating beacon is in use and must be directed so as not to dazzle or inconvenience other road users.

TOWING OF TRAILERS

The safest place for any load is within the designated load area of the vehicle.

If you have to tow you must ensure that:

- The trailer is not overloaded
- The trailer is secured to the vehicle with the correct type of pin and that the locking pin or safety catch is fully home.
- Any braking systems, safety chains or break-away devices are correctly fitted. The reversing catch (on older type hitches) is off.
- Jockey wheels/steadies are raised and secure.
- The lights work.
- The tyres are in good condition and properly inflated.
- The trailer number plate matches the vehicle.

On the road remember that:

- Different speed limits may apply.
- Braking distances will increase.

TOWING A DISABLED VEHICLE

Tow ropes must not exceed 4.5 metres and must be clearly identifiable if over 1.5 metres. Tow ropes should only be used to remove a vehicle from a position of obstruction. If it is required to tow a vehicle for an extended distance then a solid tow bar or other recovery device should be used.

DRIVERS HOURS AND RECORDS

DRIVERS HOURS.....



Drivers hours: Most drivers of commercial vehicles have limits set on the hours that they can drive without taking a break and on the hours that they can be on duty. In most circumstances we are exempted from the EEC rules that govern

most organisations but we must still comply with the *domestic rules*. These rules are quite straightforward:

- If you drive a vehicle which does not exceed 3.5 tonnes maximum permissible weight or a dual purpose vehicle then you must not drive for more than 10 hours on any day. This does not include your private mileage in your own vehicle.
- If you drive a vehicle that is heavier than 3.5 tonnes and, on any day of the week, you drive for more than four hours then, for the rest of that week, you are limited to a maximum of 10 hours driving and 11 hours duty in any 24 hour period.

This may sound a bit complicated but, in practice, it will not affect many employees. The driving time is the actual time that is spent driving on the highway. It does not relate to Bonus Targets and does not include any off-road driving.

If you think that your work might bring you within these limits then please contact your Regional Transport Manager who will be pleased to give you any additional information or advice that you require.

Drivers records: These only concern drivers of vehicles that are 'O - licenced'. You can tell if your vehicle is 'O - licenced' by looking to see if there is a second 'O - licence' disc next to the tax disc on your windscreen.

Most commercial vehicles need to be fitted with a tachograph. This is a device that records, amongst other things, the hours that a vehicle has been driven, breaks taken and speed.

As an Authority we are exempted from the requirement to fit tachographs. We can if we want to, but we don't have to!

The fact that we do not need tachographs does not mean that we never need to keep records. If on any day you drive beyond 50km from the vehicles approved operating centre or drive on the highway for more than four hours, then you need to keep records. These records can be in the form of a tachograph disc or a Record Book.

If you think that this might apply to you, then contact your Regional Transport Manager who will explain the procedures adopted in your Region.

STARTING VEHICLES USING JUMP LEADS

Warning: Jump starting is dangerous if done incorrectly. Therefore if the following conditions cannot be met or you are uncertain about them, call a competent person or a recovery agent to jump start the vehicle. This should be done in any case if the battery has its positive terminal connected to the vehicle chassis/earth.

- Do not attempt to jump start if the discharged battery is frozen or the fluid level is low.
- Avoid naked flames or sparks near the battery. Explosive gas is formed during normal battery operation.
- Never connect jump leads to more than one booster battery, or to a battery of a different voltage to the discharged battery.
- Leads should always be connected to the booster battery first to reduce the risk of sparks.
- *Remember* - batteries contain sulphuric acid. Avoid contact with skin, eyes, clothing and vehicle. If any is spilled, thoroughly wash the contaminated area with water. After personal contact obtain immediate attention after washing the affected area with water

Pre-checks:

- Ensure the booster battery is the same voltage as that which requires a boost.
- Ensure vehicles do not touch if the booster battery is fitted to another vehicle.
- Ensure all unnecessary electrical loads are turned off.

Connecting up:

- First connect one end of jump lead to the (+) positive terminal of booster battery and the other end to the positive terminal of the discharged battery. (Red cable)
- Next connect one end of the other jump lead to the (-) negative terminal of the booster battery and the other end to vehicle earth at least 30cm (12ins) from the battery terminal of discharged battery.

Start -up:

- Start the engine on the booster vehicle and run for a few minutes.
- Switch off booster vehicle engine then start the engine with the discharged battery.

Disconnections:

- When the vehicle engine is running smoothly, carefully disconnect the leads in exactly the reverse order they were connected up.

COME HOME SAFE!

