

New wheelchair accessible vehicle licences

In order to apply for a new licence to operate a vehicle as a wheelchair accessible taxi or wheelchair accessible hackney, or change the vehicle associated with an existing wheelchair accessible licence, you must ensure that the vehicle meets a new set of standards that have been designed for the comfort and safety of users. These new standards apply to all applications for wheelchair accessible taxi and hackney licences made since 8 June 2010.

Before you buy a vehicle, you should check that the vehicle meets these standards and that this can be verified by a qualified Technical Assessor. *You must obtain several items of documentation from the vehicle manufacturer or converter to support your application.*

A vehicle that was previously licensed under the old standards is unlikely to meet all the requirements of the new standards. You should therefore not complete the purchase of such a vehicle until you are certain that it will pass the technical assessment and the Initial Suitability Inspection.

The vehicle

The vehicle requirements are set out in Statutory Instrument S.I. 248 of 2010, and further explained in the Authority's *Initial Suitability Inspection Manual*, which is available on the Authority's website at www.nationaltransport.ie.

From the point of view of the person applying for the licence, the most important thing is that the vehicle must be tested by a qualified Technical Assessor, who must complete a Technical Assessor's Report to certify that the vehicle meets all the required standards.

Requirements include:

The Technical Assessor's Report must be in a form specified by the National Transport Authority. (Note: The Technical Assessor is required to carry out a much more detailed and rigorous inspection than that previously carried out for an Engineer's Report.)

In making the assessment, the Technical Assessor will test some items, and will rely on formal test data provided by the vehicle manufacturer, the vehicle converter or the supplier or installer of parts for others. *Without the relevant documentation, the Technical Assessor will be unable to certify the vehicle.*

| Element | Main requirements (For details and other requirements, see the <i>Initial Suitability Inspection Manual</i> .) | Documentary evidence required |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Seat belts | EC approval markings or labels ('e' or 'E' marking). | Y |
| Wheelchair occupant seat belts | Approval markings or labels (usually ISO standard or 'e' or 'E' marking). | Y |
| Wheelchair restraint (tie-down) | Approval markings or labels (usually ISO, or DIN, or FMVSS/SAE standard). | Y |
| Seatbelt anchorages | Strength test reports (usually seat belt to seat connection, based on Directive 76/115 EEC, as amended). | Y |
| In-vehicle* wheelchair and wheelchair occupant restraint anchorages | Strength test report. | Y |
| In-vehicle* seat and seat belt anchorages | Strength test report (for seat-to-floor connection, usually based on Directive 76/115 EEC, as amended). | Y |
| Wheelchair Space | Minimum of 700mm width, 1,200mm length, and 1,350mm headroom in vicinity of wheelchair during turning and restraining. | N |
| Doors | Minimum one wheelchair accessible door, at least 745mm x 1,250mm, and one other door to passenger compartment. | N |

Continued overleaf

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* 'In vehicle' tests are destructive tests – they cannot be performed retrospectively. They must have been performed on the same type of bodyshell and the results properly documented and certified. The suppliers of a flooring system *may* be able to provide the required test data.

| Element | Main requirements | Documentary evidence required |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| External step at accessible door | If floor or integral step of passenger compartment is more than 230mm from the ground, an access step is required for the wheelchair accessible door. Minimum dimensions and other requirements are specified in the <i>Initial Suitability Inspection Manual</i> . | N |
| Continuous surface access ramp | Maximum slope of ramp 16°; capable of supporting 300kg. If detachable, it must be suitable for handling, securely fixed when in use, safely stored when not in use, and permanently marked with the vehicle registration number | N |
| Seat height and legroom | Specified minimum and maximum for seat height, width and clearance. See <i>Initial Suitability Inspection Manual</i> for details. | N |
| Internal and entrance lighting | Adequate targeted or localised lighting is required at entrance steps, signage and floor areas and money slots in any dividing screen. | N |
| Window glass | Must be clear, min. 70% light transmission (no dark tints). | N |
| Handholds | Must be provided in the vicinity of the doors, steps and central pathways. Must be in a colour that contrasts with adjacent surfaces, and approximately circular in cross-section and 35mm in diameter. | N |
| User Manual | Must cover the vehicle and any specialist equipment in it. | Y |

The Technical Assessor

The person who tests and certifies the vehicle must:

- Hold an engineering qualification at Level 6 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications, having followed a course of study accredited by Engineers Ireland, or hold FÁS-accredited Qualified Vehicle Mechanics Certification or Qualified Vehicle Body Repair Certification;
- Have a minimum of five years' experience of working in a suitable technical environment (preferably automotive or engineering);
- Be accredited by a professional body, such as Engineers Ireland or the Institute of Automobile Engineer Assessors; and
- Have access to adequate facilities for carrying out a thorough vehicle examination.

In addition, the Authority advises prospective licensees to satisfy themselves that the assessor has appropriate professional indemnity insurance.

Licensing your vehicle

When your vehicle has been tested and certified by the Technical Assessor, you can apply for a licence to operate it as a wheelchair accessible taxi or hackney.

The other requirements and the procedure for applying are described in Information Guide G1.

Operating as an SPSV without a valid licence is an offence and could result in a fine of up to €5,000.

Further information for SPSV operators is available from the National Transport Authority's website at www.nationaltransport.ie or by phoning the Authority's industry assistance line on 0761 064 000.