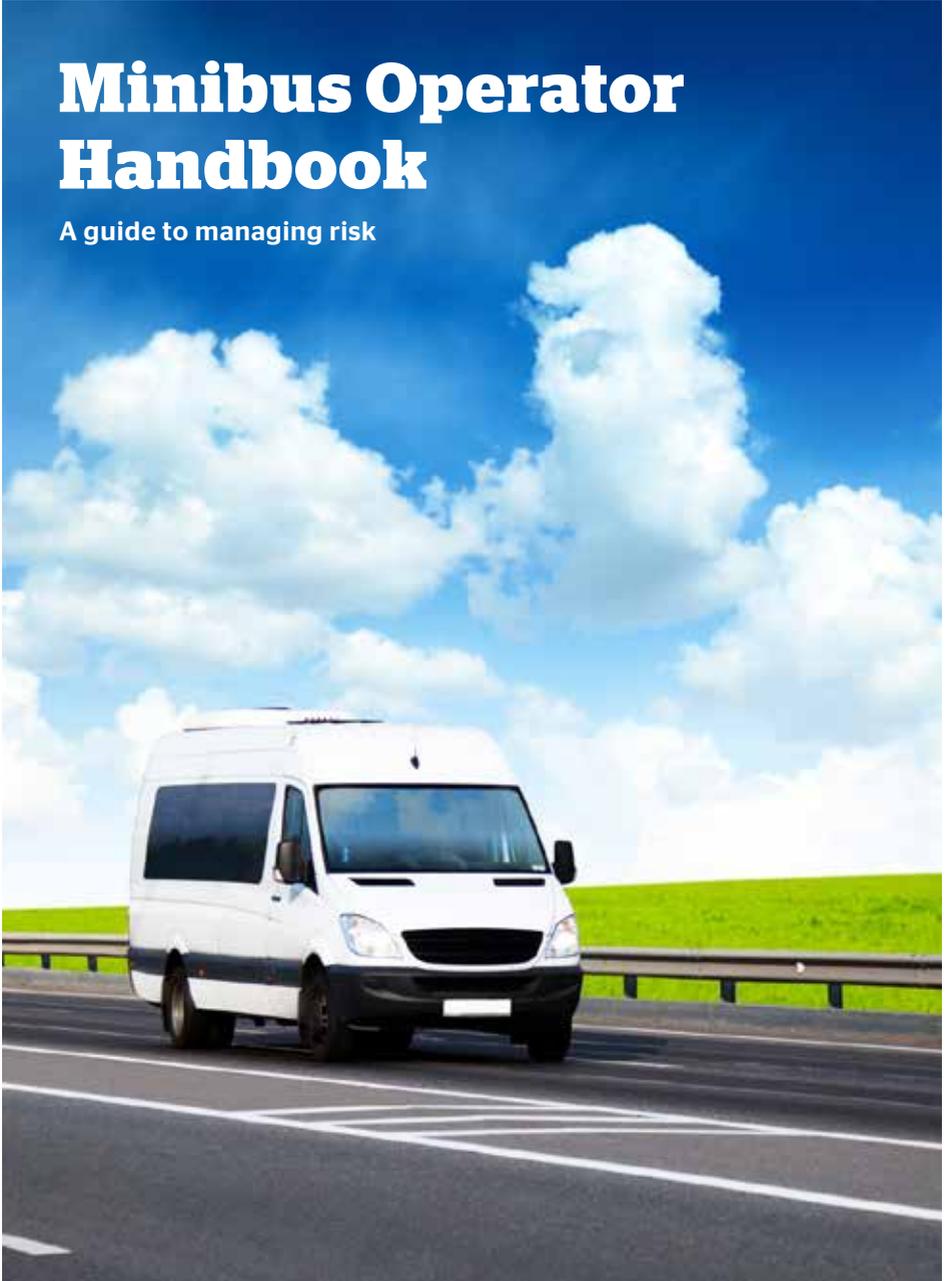


Minibus Operator Handbook

A guide to managing risk



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UK regulatory information

Driving licences for minibuses

A minibus is normally a vehicle that can carry between 8 and 16 passengers plus the driver. If you can carry more than 16 passengers then you should seek proper guidance as you may require a different category of driving licence.

Driving Licences for minibuses changed in January 2013. If you are unfamiliar with these changes please visit: www.gov.uk/changes-to-the-driving-licence-and-categories

These changes do not affect you if you held your licence before 19 January 2013. The new licence quotes the minibus category as D1 and you will need to have an authority to tow a trailer which is categorised as D1E. It is important to note that all new photocard licences now have a life of only 5 years not 10.

Notes:

If you passed your driving test prior to 1997, any qualification to drive minibuses with or without a trailer is restricted to non-hire and reward use. If you seek to drive a minibus for Hire or Reward, it is necessary for you to pass the appropriate theory and practical test for that class of vehicle. Similarly, should you be renewing a licence because of your age (70 years old or more) then you will be required to meet the level of health and fitness required to drive such a vehicle.

If you passed your driving test for cars (Category B entitlement) after 1 January 1997 and you are driving for Hire and Reward under a Section 19 permit and you are being paid,

you can only do so if you have passed a further test to obtain Category D1.

If you wish to take a minibus (8 seats or larger) outside the UK in the EU/EEA area, irrespective of the purpose of the trip, you will need to have the full Category D1 entitlement (obtained through examination) unless all four of the criteria below are met:

- It is not for Hire and Reward
- You passed your driving test before 1st January 1997 and have the Category D1 entitlement (not for Hire and Reward) on your licence
- You are not being paid
- The visit is a temporary one.

Do you drive for 'Hire or Reward'?

This is important for you to understand as you will have to meet additional requirements. Hire or Reward is where any payment, be it money or other benefit, either directly from the passengers or from a third party on behalf of them, gives them a right to be carried. If there is a payment, then it will be for Hire or Reward. It becomes more complicated as the courts have also stated that Hire or Reward exists in cases where 'petrol money' changes hands or where a courtesy bus is laid on by a hotel or other such business. If you are in any doubt you should seek advice.

Operator's licencing and permits

Section 19 Permits

If you operate for Hire or Reward, you must ensure that you have a valid Operator's Licence or permit that allows for the minibus to operate for Hire or Reward (Section 19 Permit - Driver may be paid or unpaid). Both are available from the Traffic Commissioners who can advise you further.

Section 22 Permits

Should your role include driving a bus of any size on a 'local' service, you will require a Section 22 permit. This is also applied for through the Traffic Commissioners. Again the driver may be paid or unpaid

Limitations of Section 19 and 22 Permits

This permit system only applies to the UK, so if you are to travel outside of the UK you will have to comply with European Regulations. If you are unfamiliar with these rules you should consult your Transport Manager or the Traffic Commissioners.

Taking a minibus abroad

If travelling abroad (outside the UK) in any minibus you will need to comply with European regulations regarding drivers' hours and tachographs. If you are in any doubt as to your responsibilities under these regulations you must seek proper guidance.

A useful site is:

www.gov.uk/tachographs/overview

Or you can contact either the Department for Transport or the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA). Both will provide written guidance or offer personal advice. www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/driver-and-vehicle-standards-agency

Seat belts

European Directives require that any minibus first used on or after 1 October 2001 must be fitted with seat belts to every seat except side facing ones. Basically all forward facing seats require a 3 point belt. Rear facing seats may be fitted with 2 point belts.

If the vehicle was first used before 1 October 2001, there is no requirement for seat belts to be fitted. If, however, the seat belts have been fitted they must comply with European Directives.

It should be noted that children are not to sit in rear facing seats of pre 1 October 2001 vehicles. They are permitted to sit in rear facing seats in a post 1 October 2001 vehicle which has either a 2 or 3 point belt.

The only exemption to the need for a safety belt is where the person has a seat belt exemption certificate. In all other cases passengers must wear a safety belt.



Minibuses and drivers' hours

The regulations that govern how long a person can drive a minibus for can be complex. You must ensure that you fully understand and comply with these rules. They are there to protect you as the operator/driver, plus passengers and members of the public. In brief:

- Vehicles with 9 to 16 passenger seats are subject to EU rules when used commercially, except when used on regular services which are 50 km or less.
- Where EU drivers' hours rules apply, all vehicles must be fitted with a tachograph, which, for vehicles registered on or after 1 May 2006, will be a digital tachograph.
- A vehicle which is being used on a Section 19 permit is still a public service vehicle and is subject to domestic drivers' hours rules when a person is driving in the course of his/her employment. Therefore if payment to the driver has taken place (unless it is out of pocket expenses) domestic drivers' hours rules apply.

Domestic drivers' hours rules do not apply for the private use of a minibus or when permit vehicles are driven by volunteer (i.e. unpaid) drivers.

If a vehicle is being used as a public service vehicle (PSV) on a Regular Service (local/non local), the relevant domestic drivers' hours rules apply (or in the case of a route exceeding 50 km, EU Hours Rules). For more information visit: www.gov.uk/guidance/drivers-hours-passenger-vehicles

Most commercial minibus operations are governed by either UK domestic or EU

rules on drivers' hours. Always check with your company to see which set of rules you might be operating under. Breaches can result in legal action against you and possibly the company.

EU drivers' hours rules

These rules were revised with effect from 11 April 2007, when Regulation EC 3820/85 was replaced by Regulation 561/2006.

Breaks and rest

A break is a period of no less than 15 minutes during which time a driver may not perform any other work and is exclusively used for recuperation. The break may be on or off duty. It is permissible to take a break on a moving vehicle that someone else is driving (although a digital tachograph cannot be set to 'rest' for the second driver).

Rest is always off duty and is any uninterrupted period of at least one hour during which the driver may freely dispose of his or her time. Rest can only be taken on a vehicle if it is stationary and is fitted with a bunk.

Duty time

Duty time includes time spent on duty by an employee in employment which involves driving, or being available to drive, a passenger vehicle. However, duty is not limited to driving time or to time spent working on or in connection with the vehicle. It can include other time spent acting under the employer's specific instructions. (e.g. travelling to and from a vehicle pick up point in a travel vehicle).

The working day

The working day is a period not exceeding 24 hours. It starts from when a driver commences work after a daily or weekly rest. Where multiple manning takes place, the working day may be extended to a maximum period of 30 hours.

The working week

The working week is the seven days commencing at 0001 hrs on Monday until 0000 hrs the following Sunday.

Daily rest

A driver must take a continuous period of 11 hours rest in each period of 24 hours. The period of 11 hours may be reduced to 9 hours on not more than three occasions between any two weekly rest periods. There is no compensation required.

Where a driver takes daily rest periods away from base, they may be taken in a vehicle, provided that there are suitable sleeping facilities for the driver and the vehicle is stationary.

Split daily rest

As an alternative to daily rest of 11 or 9 hours, daily rest can be split into two or three separate periods totalling 12 hours. The first must be at least 3 hours and the second period must be at least 9 hours.

Multiple manning

Multiple staffing of a vehicle allows an extension of the working day from 24 to 30 hours. This period of 30 hours must contain a daily rest period of 9 hours, being the final part of the 30 hour period.

Except for the first hour, drivers must be together on the same vehicle for the full duration of the period during which multiple manning rules are being used. Multiple staffing rules cannot be used to rotate drivers working vehicles in convoy, e.g. 3 drivers sharing the driving of 2 vehicles. In these

circumstances, each driver must obey single manning rules.

Weekly rest

In each fixed week a driver must take a weekly unbroken rest period of at least 45 hours. It is possible to reduce the weekly rest from 45 to 24 hours.

In any two consecutive weeks, a driver must take at least one uninterrupted 45 hour weekly rest (Regular) and at least one other weekly rest (Reduced), which may be reduced to as little as 24 hours, regardless of where it is taken. Compensation for reduced weekly rest must be given en bloc, and attached to another rest period of at least 9 hours, before the end of the third week, following the week in which the reduction is taken. A maximum of 144 hours (6 x 24 hours) can elapse between the end of one weekly rest period and the beginning of the next.

Weekly rest may overlap the midnight Sunday boundary separating working weeks. It can apply to either week in which it falls. However, there must be no doubt about as to which week the rest applies. A single week rest period cannot be applied to more than one week.

Where a driver takes weekly rest periods away from base, they may be taken in a vehicle, provided that there are suitable sleeping facilities for each driver and the vehicle is stationary.

Daily driving

Daily driving is a maximum 9 hours. On no more than two occasions in a fixed week it may be extended to a maximum 10 hours without any need for a compensating reduction.

Weekly driving

There is a weekly driving limit of 56 hours.

Fortnightly driving

There is a driving limit of 90 hours in any two consecutive weeks.

Maximum period of driving and minimum breaks

The maximum period of driving under EU rules is 4½ hours (continuous) which must be followed by a break of at least 45 minutes unless the driver is starting a daily or weekly rest period.

As an alternative to a continuous break of 45 minutes, up to two separate breaks can be taken, the first of which must be at least 15 minutes long and the second of the breaks must be at least 30 minutes, making a total of 45 minutes. Once a 45 minute break has been taken either as a single break or as two separate breaks, the calculation on driving time begins again and no account is taken of previous driving periods and breaks.

Under working time regulations, it is possible to continue to work (on 'other work') up to 6 hours, provided the four and half hours driving time is not exceeded.

Maximum number of daily driving periods or driving days

A weekly rest period must be taken after a maximum of 6 daily driving periods.

It should be noted that it is possible to work 12 consecutive days, provided there is a 24 hour rest period between the 6th and 7th period. This can be achieved by finishing before twelve noon and commencing the following day after 12 noon. However, the consequential compensatory rest would be up to 66 hours in such cases. In effect, it is not possible for drivers to routinely work 6 day weeks.

Interrupted rest – ferry/train

When a vehicle is transported by ferry boat or train, and the accompanying driver takes a regular rest period (not less than 11 hours)

this rest period may be interrupted on up to two occasions. The total period of interruption must be no more than 1 hour. During that regular daily rest period, the driver must have access to a bunk or couchette.

Emergencies

Emergency rules can only be invoked in absolutely genuine emergencies.

A driver may, in an emergency, disregard driving time and daily rest provided all the following points are observed.

- Road safety is not put at risk
- The extension of hours is limited to the extent that it is necessary to ensure the safety of passengers or the vehicle
- The first stopping place suitable for ensuring the safety of passengers must be observed

Continuation to the end of the journey is permitted only if there are no suitable stopping places available before the end of the journey and then only if road safety is not put at risk

- The occurrence and reasons are noted by the driver on the back of the tachograph chart.

This provision is not an open cheque for drivers to break the rules. There must be a genuine emergency and road safety must never be jeopardised by the driver.

UK domestic rules

If you are operating in the UK, either on a Regular Service that is below 50 km, or you are driving a vehicle with 15 or fewer passenger seats on any type of operation, you will be subject to UK domestic rules on drivers' hours. They differ from the EU rules.

Daily driving

The maximum aggregate driving time is 10 hours per working day.

Breaks

A driver must take a break of at least 30 minutes after driving continuously for 5½ hours.

A driver may work a through duty of 8½ hours driving provided that accumulated layover time is at least 45 minutes. This must be followed by either a daily rest period or a break of at least 30 minutes.

Maximum spreadover

The maximum length of a driver's working day (from signing on to signing off) is 16 hours.

Daily rest

A driver must have a period of at least 10 hours between each working day which can be reduced to 8½ on no more than 3 occasions per week.

Weekly rest

A driver must have a period of at least 24 hours off duty every 2 weeks, i.e. each fortnight. The rest period does not have to be a calendar day. It can be taken at the beginning or end of a working fortnight and can fall partly in one fortnight and partly in the next, provided it is started in the fortnight to which it applies.

Mixed EU and UK work

Drivers working partly under EU rules and partly under the UK domestic rules must observe three basic principles:

- Time spent driving or on duty under one set of rules may not count as a break period or rest period under the other set.
- Driving and other duties under the EU rules count towards the limits on driving and other duties under UK rules.
- Driving and other duties under UK rules count as attendance at work under the EU rules.

Further information is contained in PSV375, available at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/drivers-hours-passenger-vehicles



km/h

Tachographs

Where you are undertaking EU work, you are required to drive at all times (unless agreed in writing) in compliance with tachograph regulations. You must know the rules and comply with them.

For more information visit:

www.gov.uk/guidance/drivers-hours-passenger-vehicles

Employers must:

- Ensure that drivers are supplied with sufficient analogue charts or paper for digital tachographs
- Collect completed charts not later than 30 days after use and then keep for 12 months
- Download digital tachograph cards.

Drivers must:

Write on the disc:

- Surname followed by first name (no initials)
- Date and place chart begins with odometer reading
- Date and place chart ends with odometer reading
- Registration number of vehicle(s) used, with odometer readings.
- Keep completed charts for at least 28 days plus the current week day then return them to their employer as soon as possible and certainly within 42 days after use.
- If inspection of your tachograph takes place by a police officer or vehicle inspector, make sure that the tachograph analogue disc or digital print-out is signed by the officer

- See that the instrument is kept reading and running
- Ensure that correct mode position is selected – ‘other work’ (crossed hammers), ‘available’ (periods of availability), rest. ‘Drive’ is selected automatically
- Ensure that an analogue tachograph is set to official UK time at all times, including throughout an international journey. A digital tachograph will show UTC time at all times on printouts, although local time can be also be shown on the screen for reference purposes only
- Be able to produce tachograph charts and relevant digital printouts for the previous 28 days
- If the analogue tachograph becomes defective, complete the current chart by hand or fill in a temporary chart and attach to the original. With a digital tachograph, if it becomes defective, take a printout if possible and complete the back as with an analogue chart
- Keep printouts of digital tachographs where the card has been lost, stolen or become defective, where it has been produced to correct a driver error, used to record any notes against ‘activities’, or used to explain the reason for departure from the rules in an emergency
- Arrange for a defective tachograph to be repaired ‘en route’ if the vehicle does not return to base within 7 days.

Driving effectively

- Do not over-rev the engine
- Avoid excessive idling - switch the engine off if standing for more than a couple of minutes
- Avoid harsh braking and acceleration
- Do not exceed a safe speed for the road and conditions, remember speed limits are not a target
- Always concentrate on driving, think ahead and anticipate the road and what other road users may be about to do
- You can reduce costs by driving carefully to avoid accidents and reduce wear and tear
- Watch out for overhead obstructions, soft verges, height, length and width restrictions
- When driving, maintain safe separation distances appropriate to the conditions and avoid unnecessary overtaking, as it may give the impression to customers that you are racing
- Always be safe and courteous to other road users, this reflects well on you and the company.

Safe parking

- Park your vehicle legally
- When away from base, always find a safe and secure place to park the minibus overnight and lock all doors and lockers
- Ensure you make every effort to park where it is safe for passengers to embark/disembark and where your vehicle is less likely to be damaged by other manoeuvring vehicles
- Ensure the vehicle master switch is turned off
- Remember a poorly or illegally parked vehicle reflects badly on your company

Mobile telephones

It is illegal to use your phone while driving unless you have hands-free access, such as Bluetooth. If you use your phone hands-free you must stay in full control of your vehicle at all times. The Police can stop you if they think you're not in control and you can be prosecuted.

Highway Code

As a professional operator/driver you must know the Highway Code and abide by it at all times.

Speed limits for minibuses

Minibus drivers must observe the national speed limits which are:

- Motorway 70 mph
- Dual carriageway 60 mph
- Single carriageway 50 mph
- Built-up areas 20, 30 or 40 mph

Minibus towing trailers:

- Motorway 60 mph
- Dual carriageway 50 mph
- Single carriageway 50 mph

Bad driving can reflect poorly on your company, including driving too close to other vehicles, retaliating to road rage or travelling in the outside lane of a 3 or 4 lane motorway. The last of these may be legal but can reflect poorly on the company.

It is also important for you to remember that the vehicle will change its handling when it has different numbers of passengers on board.



Young people and special requirements

School minibus contracts

When the minibus passengers are mainly children under 16, you must display signs to the front and rear of the minibus warning other road users. These must be removed when the children are no longer present. Signs should not be used unless it is to comply with any other legal requirements.

It is advisable that those who transport children should complete a Criminal Records Bureau check in order to carry out the role.

School bus signs

The Road Vehicles Lighting (Amendment) Regulations 1994 indicate the size and colour of the signs that are to be used to warn other persons and road users that children are boarding and alighting from vehicles and when a vehicle is being used as a school bus. Use of any other signs may not meet legal requirements and in the event of any accident could result in legal action.

These signs must be used when taking children, under 16 years of age, to and from school. Should you be involved in taking children from school on an educational trip or other official purpose, then there is no requirement for the signs to be visible; in fact they should not be used. To supplement the signs and provide a greater degree of warning to other road users, the regulations allow for the use of hazard warning lights to be displayed when children are getting on or off the bus and when they are about to. Leaving hazard warning lights on when the vehicle is in motion is an offence.

Where your journey is delayed, ensure wherever possible that you give notice to the school or persons who may be waiting. Try to give a proper new estimate for arrival. Mobile phones should only be used if hands-free and you are in full control of the vehicle.

Remain professional at all times

If passengers are causing a problem you should remain professional at all times, irrespective of any provocation you may experience. Be extra mindful when dealing with children.

Under no circumstances will it be acceptable for you to manhandle, remove or evict a child from the minibus. This could expose them to grave danger. Where serious problems occur, examine what resources are available. If there are escorts on the vehicle, ensure that they are more appropriately positioned throughout the vehicle. Always ensure that the matter is fully reported to the traffic manager upon your return.

Wherever possible, passengers must not be left unattended in the vehicle.

Passengers with wheelchairs

Staff must ensure that they are competent to assist wheelchair passengers in both entering and exiting the vehicle. Wheelchair reliant passengers should be assisted to ensure that they are comfortable and safely secured in the vehicle. In the event of an emergency, passengers with disabilities should be given whatever support they need to ensure their safety.

Adequate space should be maintained for the proper siting and security of wheelchairs. Wheelchairs vary in size up to 1.2m (1200mm) x 0.7m (700mm).

Under no circumstances should wheelchairs be placed in a position that blocks or restricts access to emergency exits or be placed in aisles. If you are in any doubt regarding the safe carriage and placement of the wheelchair you must consult your supervisor or manager. If any wheelchair passenger refuses to wear the appropriate safety belt they should be asked to present their seat belt exemption certificate for inspection by you. In every case you must inform your manager or supervisor. No such passenger should be transported without being properly seated and secured.

The overriding issue is the safety of you and your passengers and this must dictate your actions. It is not acceptable at any time to place yourself or them, or allow them to place themselves, in any danger. You are responsible for their safety.

The safe use of tail lifts

The checklist below should be used in every case of a wheelchair passenger being assisted into and out of a minibus when using a tail lift:

- Ensure the vehicle is positioned safely with the handbrake secured for deployment of the tail lift (it is recommended the vehicle be left in gear as an added precaution). All persons required to operate tail lifts must be trained in manual handling and in the safe operation of tail lifts
- The engine must be switched off when the hoist is being operated
- Wheelchairs placed on the hoist must have their brakes applied and must be facing into the vehicle
- Care should be taken to ensure that clients do not have their feet at the edge of the platform where it meets with the floor of the vehicle
- When the platform is returned to the 'Parked' position make absolutely sure that it is secure
- Electric wheelchairs must have engaged neutral and should be wheeled manually on to the lift platform
- The lift platform must have the safety stop raised
- This equipment can be dangerous if not operated correctly and must only be used by staff who have been properly trained. It is a requirement that one operative stands on the lift platform behind the client whilst the other remains on the ground using the lift controls
- Remember that the vehicle has been left in gear when you re-start the engine.

Operational procedures

You should operate safely and legally at all times. In everything you do you should be asking yourself:

- Am I legal?
- Am I safe?

The Health and Safety at Work Act places responsibility on BOTH the employer and the employee. Your responsibilities include but are not restricted to:

- Exercising 'reasonable care' to look after your own health and safety
- Ensuring that what you do, or fail to do, doesn't harm others
- Using work items, including personal protective equipment (PPE), correctly
- Not interfering with or misusing 'equipment'
- Reporting faults and defects.

Fitness for duty

It is your responsibility to ensure that whenever you arrive for work you are properly rested and that you have complied with proper rest periods. This applies to all driving duties but in particular where you will be engaged in driving during what could be termed 'unsocial' hours. Arriving for work when you are tired or unfit puts you, passengers and the public at risk and will not be tolerated.

Driving licences

You must have your driving licence (and counterpart) with you at all times when using a company vehicle. These may

be inspected periodically and verified with the DVLA. You may be required to sign a document that allows the company to access and check this information at their discretion.

You must at the earliest opportunity notify your supervisor or manager should you be reported/summonsed or issued with a fixed penalty notice for any driving or vehicle-related issue.

You must ensure that you meet all the medical requirements of your licence and that any changes in your health that affect such requirements are notified immediately to your supervisor, manager and the DVLA. Should you be unfamiliar with these requirements see the following website for more information. www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions

Smoking

You must not smoke at any time in any company vehicle. You should not smoke within sight of any children if engaged in any school minibus contract.

Passengers and alcohol

It is a serious offence for alcohol to be carried on minibuses that are used to carry passengers to or from certain designated sporting events. The company, the hirer of the vehicle, and the driver, are all liable to prosecution if they knowingly cause or permit intoxicating liquor to be carried anywhere on the vehicle.

- It is an offence for a person to be in possession of alcohol while on the vehicle and for a person to be drunk on the vehicle
- The police have powers to stop and search minibuses and drivers must co-operate fully
- Heavy penalties with maximum fines can be imposed, and a possible prison sentence in certain circumstances can also be imposed on summary conviction.

Always check with the company when taking a minibus to a sporting event to see if the ban applies.

Be careful when dealing with passengers who may be under the influence of alcohol. Do not place yourself or other passengers at risk. Where the matter is serious you should contact the police. Where relevant and wherever possible as part of your normal introduction, ensure that you point out if the carriage of alcohol on the minibus is not acceptable. Always communicate fairly but firmly and ensure that passengers are aware of any restrictions at the earliest opportunity.

You are the company representative

You are the face of your company. The company will be judged by how passengers are treated by you. It is important that you ensure that the first impression of the customer is positive and that you look and are professional at all times.

When you first meet customers ensure that you properly introduce yourself. Customers generally respond well to being kept informed. Ensure that your customers are advised as to how any relevant equipment such as heating and ventilation works. Ensure that entertainment such as radio or DVD materials are to the taste of your customers.

Engaging with your customers early allows you to understand their needs. Throughout the journey ensure that passengers are kept informed regarding journey times and any issues including journeys that are not progressing to time.

Ensure that passengers are fully aware of safety issues such as exits and fire extinguishers.

If you as the driver are making announcements, you must ensure that it is completely safe to do so.

At the end of the journey ensure that they have all their belongings and thank them, adding that you hope to see them again. Also, ensure that you are aware of other services and products that the company can offer. These can be recommended to customers where appropriate. Repeat business is a big part of any successful company. You can help that.

Complaints

If a customer complains to you, you should remain calm, polite and professional. Take ownership of the problem, whatever it may be, and where possible resolve it. Where the problem cannot be resolved you should:

- Take their name and address
- Record with them what the problem is
- Ask them to write to the company outlining the nature and content of their complaint.

No employee should make any statement, whether verbal or written, that undermines the company or its position.

Lost property

All customers' property is carried entirely at the passenger's own risk. Never accept liability or responsibility for any item left on the vehicle, even if it is locked.

Anyone who finds lost property on your vehicle should hand it to you as the driver, or to a company representative. You have a responsibility by law to search the vehicle for lost property either before or at the end of a journey, where practicable.

A driver has a legal duty to keep lost property safe until it can be returned to the office, clearly identifying the journey and vehicle. You have the right to open packages, bags or other containers to identify the owner.

Perishable goods may be destroyed or disposed of after 48 hours if not claimed, or earlier if they become objectionable.

Ensure that when checking left property you do so carefully. Passengers may have left items which could be sharp, such as needles. These can result in you requiring medical attention.

Vehicle checks

The law requires you to check your vehicle daily for any defects. This will include a safety check. Failure to complete this check could expose you to prosecution.

Other equipment should also be checked such as any in-vehicle audio and video equipment. Any in-vehicle announcement system should also be checked as this could also be required in an emergency. You must report promptly any defects or symptoms of defects.

- Any defects found either during the daily check, while the vehicle is in use, or when it returns to base, must be reported in writing using the vehicle defect reporting system.
- Reports should include registration or fleet number, date, details of the defects or symptoms and the driver's name.
- Vehicles must not be used if they have any defect that affects the vehicle's safe operation or may be contrary to law, for example a defective tyre or exhaust.

Cleanliness of the vehicle is very important

- Keep your vehicle clean and tidy throughout the day
- Try to encourage tidiness and cleanliness
- Check out your vehicle before you pick up passengers
- Keep the vehicle tidy. Loose objects can be dangerous in a collision, heavy braking or during an emergency evacuation
- Remember your vehicle is a reflection of you and your company so should always be professionally presented.

First aid and fire extinguisher equipment

- Make sure that you know where safety equipment is located and how to operate it
- Ensure that it is working properly and where necessary has been properly maintained.

Minibus (Pre-use) checklist

The driver should conduct a pre-use check that will be recorded on the correct form. If no form has been used, then the view of the company can be that it did not take place. It is your responsibility to ensure that the vehicle is safe and road legal. This check should be completed whenever a new driver starts duty with a minibus, irrespective of whether or not the check has already been completed that day.

- Oil Level (agreed)
- Coolant (agreed)
- Windscreen washer fluid (every driver should check)
- Brake Fluid (agreed)
- Fire extinguishers should be checked to ensure they are in date (where appropriate).

If any faults or items are missing, you must bring this to the attention of your supervisor or manager. The vehicle must not be used until the matter is rectified.

Speed limiters

Your vehicle may be fitted with a speed limiter. You must ensure that you know the characteristics of the vehicle you are charged with operating. You must not rely on the fact that the vehicle cannot exceed the legal limit. It is your responsibility to drive safely and within the requirements of the road traffic laws.

Safety is your main priority

You are responsible for the operation of the vehicle. You are expected to be polite and courteous, however safety is your main priority. As such, passengers are expected to behave in a proper manner and it is not permissible for them to distract the driver deliberately or inadvertently. They must remain seated and wear a safety belt at all times. It is not permitted for passengers to smoke or drink alcohol in the minibus at any time.

When dropping passengers off, ensure their safety by making sure that they properly move away from the vehicle before driving off and that they have all their belongings and that nothing is caught in the vehicle. If the passengers are children, ensure that they are not left stranded and that a person is present to meet them and be responsible for them.

Ensure that as you approach a stop passengers do not, in preparation, remove belts early and start to move. Ensure that doors are not opened until the vehicle has fully come to a stop and the handbrake is applied.



In the event of an incident

Breakdowns

If you break down, follow the breakdown procedure and inform the appropriate people.

- Your primary concern is the comfort and safety of your clients and the quick and efficient continuation of their journey
- Follow your breakdown procedure. Ensure your passengers are in a safe position if it is necessary to evacuate the vehicle i.e. if broken down on a motorway hard shoulder. And communicate with your contact point(s), giving your exact location, passenger numbers and a contact number together with a concise report as to the possible cause of failure. Keep your passengers informed about what is being done to resolve the problem.

It is important to remember that your safety is as important as others so you must not put yourself at risk. Where there is a breakdown or accident, give clear guidance and support passengers who may be shocked and disorientated.

Emergency exits and evacuation

As the driver, you are responsible for ensuring that any evacuation of the minibus due to breakdown or collision is executed quickly and safely. You should ensure that you are in a position to assist and direct the evacuation. Where possible, high visibility clothing should be worn to protect you and draw attention to other passengers' movements. Remember your safety is important too.

Passengers should be reminded not to use doors that put them closer to moving traffic.

Items placed on the floors should be moved to under seats to ensure that exit routes remain clear and trip free. Passengers should generally exit in accordance with seating positions closest to the exit, leaving the minibus quickly but not in a hurried fashion. If they can remove belongings without delay then that should be a decision you should take in light of the urgency of the evacuation. In bad weather passengers should take clothing to ensure that they remain warm. Remember shock can be made worse by cold and damp.

Emergency exits should be used unless they expose passengers to additional risks. Remember to warn passengers that exit doors will generally have a drop to the road or kerb. Ensure that you check and warn passengers as to the nature of the ground they are exiting onto particularly if uneven or not stable.

Passengers with disability or mobility restrictions should be assisted by those most able to support them without causing holdups. Where necessary, give clear concise guidance indicating which person should be moving and when. Ensure that persons exiting the vehicle move to a safe location away from flowing traffic. Passengers should not be allowed to wander.

Younger passengers may not be aware of obvious risks. Warn them. Do not take for granted their knowledge of hazards.

When stopping on fast roads such as dual carriageways and motorways ensure that you use the hazard warning lights and that passengers are evacuated in accordance with safety guidelines. They should be taken to a safe location preferably with the protection of a barrier away from the carriageways. Be careful as the ground could be uneven and remember that passengers with special needs will require extra care and support.

Calling the emergency services

Give the emergency services the relevant information:

- Vehicle location – on motorways look out for identification posts
- Number and status of passengers involved
- Details of any injuries
- Special needs, e.g. disabled or blind persons, or children
- What actions you have already taken
- Listen to the advice given by emergency or breakdown services
- Ensure that you provide them with company contact details so that the company can be updated
- Finally, ensure that you provide a contact number in case you lose contact and they can call you back.

Accidents

Much of what is written below has to be quite formal. That is because the requirements are legal duties and any failure means that you could be committing an offence.

If you are involved in any accident you must stop. If you don't you will commit an offence which can result in a prison sentence.

- Ensure that all the passengers are safe and unhurt. If there are injuries ensure that the emergency services are aware and attending
- Follow the evacuation procedures outlined earlier to ensure the on-going safety of all passengers including yourself
- Inform your company as soon as possible

You should supply certain details to any person who has reasonable grounds for requiring them. The details are as below.

At no time should you accept blame for the accident. Details to be provided will depend on the circumstances of the accident. You **MUST** supply these details. If you do not, you will be in contravention of the law.

Damage only accident

- Your name and home address
- The name and address of the vehicle owner
- Registration number of the vehicle.

Personal injury accident

Where there is ANY injury you should supply:

- Your name and home address
- The name and address of the vehicle owner
- Registration number of the vehicle
- Details of the vehicle insurance.

If you are in any doubt whether any injury exists you should always assume that it does and provide the details above.

Where the above details cannot be supplied at the time to a person who has reasonable grounds to ask for them, this places a further requirement on to you as the driver.

- You MUST in person report the matter to the police as soon as practicable and in any case within 24 hours. This means that you must at the very earliest time report it to a police officer or to a police station. ANY delay in doing so may render you liable to prosecution
- A police officer may require you to produce driving documents including your licence, a certificate of motor insurance and a valid test certificate for the vehicle (if applicable) immediately or at a police station, which you can decide, within 7 days. You must comply with this and if you fail to do so you may be liable to prosecution. You can liaise with your transport manager regarding these issues if they apply as you may require some guidance.

It is only in the most extreme circumstances that you should believe that you may not have to comply with the above process and that should be as a result of legal advice.

Fire

If you suspect that there is a risk, even if a small one, that a fire could start you must immediately evacuate the vehicle in accordance with your safety procedures. You must give clear instructions and do everything to ensure the safety of both you and the passengers.

You should not attempt to tackle any fire unless it is completely safe to do so and it is a very small localised one where there is no risk of fuel igniting. Your first priority is the safety of yourself, the passengers and other road users. Vehicles are very unpredictable when alight and present a very serious danger to everyone in the vicinity.

Follow the evacuation procedure and ensure all occupants are in a safe place. You should consider such issues as being up-wind. Vehicle smoke can be toxic because of the materials that can burn. The smoke from a burning vehicle is also very dense and can obscure persons from other road users so a position that was originally safe may create a new risk. Be aware at all times where you and the passengers are. Continually re-assess the situation. Remain calm and wherever possible in contact with the emergency services. Ensure that you call the emergency services at the earliest opportunity.



At the end of the journey

Safety is still paramount and all passengers should be supervised when leaving the vehicle. Where the passengers are children you must ensure that a person is present to ensure their safety. Ensure that persons who require additional support are assisted.

Never allow passengers to leave until the vehicle is at a complete standstill, in neutral and safely parked by an adjacent pavement or other traffic-free area, with the hand brake engaged. Always park so that passengers step onto the footway and not onto the road.

Do not leave children alone if no-one has arrived to collect them. Ensure you know what to do if a child is not collected.

Report any problems or incidents that occurred during the trip to your line manager.

Supervise the passengers when boarding or leaving the vehicle, taking particular care if they are leaving by the rear exit. If driving abroad in a country that drives on the right, be aware that some doors may open onto the roadside.

Take time to thank passengers. Remember that repeat business is essential to the success of any business and that you represent your company.

Safe operating checklist

The following checklist should be complied with as necessary whenever the vehicle is being operated. Where there is a vehicle escort then some of the checklist below can be tasked to the escort.

- Conduct a pre-drive safety check (every journey)
 - This will expose them to risk and you to the risk of prosecution
- Ensure that you are familiar with the vehicle and its size, in particular width and height and the location of the fuel cap
- Plan your journey and where to take regular breaks, avoiding the onset of fatigue. This assists passengers who may also require regular breaks. Be able to recognise when you are getting tired; identify the signs for yourself
- Ensure that when passengers are getting on or off the vehicle it is parked with the handbrake applied. Should you have to leave the vehicle to assist passengers, the engine should be switched off and the keys removed. For additional safety, leave the vehicle in gear. This will provide more stability for assisting disabled persons onto and off the minibus
- The minibus should, wherever possible, be parked to maximise safety with the nearside to the kerb, allowing access from the pavement without the need for passengers to enter the road. Should you need to assist disabled passengers by means of the tailgate lift, ensure that wherever possible the vehicle faces oncoming traffic. In this way passengers are not between the minibus and oncoming traffic
- If travelling abroad then place the vehicle to maximise passenger safety and always support their entry and exit
- Manage the placement of passengers within the minibus to ensure that persons are best placed to support other passengers in alighting and boarding
- Know how many passengers the minibus can accommodate safely and do not exceed it.
 - Ensure that passengers are properly seated and that safety belts are in use. Pay particular attention to younger or shorter (under 5' tall) customers who, where necessary, should use a special seat or booster cushion
 - Always ensure that wheelchairs are properly secured or stowed safely. If in use they should be secured and the passenger also restrained properly
 - Ensure that when undertaking school travel with younger passengers that the appropriate school signs are properly placed so as not to obstruct your view and that they are removed when the need ceases
 - Maintain an up to date list of all passengers including staff so that in the event of an accident or other problem notification of schools, next of kin can be managed quickly. This list should also include any medical or other needs. Ensure that it is kept in a place readily available with other documentation
 - Wear high visibility clothing to warn other road users
 - Check the proper functioning of specialist equipment such as tail lifts and ensure that you are competent to operate them. Comply with instructions for use and ensure the safety of the customer at all times
 - Ensure before driving off that it is safe to do so and that all doors are secured and that there are no obstructions or hazards. Ensure that all passengers are accounted for and that all personal items are stowed securely and safely keeping exits and walkways free from obstruction.

Useful information

The **Community Transport Association** produce a range of minibus advice.

Community Transport Association
Aeroworks
5 Adair Street
Manchester
M1 2NQ

Tel: 0161 351 1475

www.ctauk.org/

The **Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents** produce a range of safety publications, such as 'The Safety of School Transport' and a 'Code of Practice'. ROSPA also run training courses for drivers.

ROSPA House
28 Calthorpe Road
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B1 5RP

Tel: 0121 248 2000

www.rospa.com

All **Traffic Commissioners** now operate from a central location.

Hillcrest House
386 Harehills Lane
Leeds
LS9 6NF

Tel: 0300 123 9000

The **Driver Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA)** has information concerning the theory and practical tests for the Category D1 entitlement.

Driver Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA)
P O Box 1286
Warrington
WA1 9GN

Tel: 0300 200 1188

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/driver-and-vehicle-standards-agency

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