

DVSA Compliance for UK Hauliers: Complete Guide 2026

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Meta Description: Complete DVSA compliance guide for UK hauliers. Learn driver hours rules, vehicle checks, tachograph requirements & avoid £300+ fines. Built by a Class 1 driver.

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Introduction

DVSA compliance isn't just paperwork—it's the difference between a profitable haulage business and one facing £300+ fines per vehicle, O-licence revocations, and driver bans. As a Class 1 driver who's been pulled into DVSA checkpoints more times than I can count, I've seen firsthand what happens when compliance slips.

In this guide, I'll break down everything UK hauliers need to know about DVSA compliance in 2026, from driver hours to vehicle checks, and how modern fleet management software can automate 80% of the admin burden.

What is DVSA Compliance?

The **Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA)** is the UK government body responsible for enforcing road safety standards for commercial vehicles. For haulage operators, DVSA compliance covers:

1. **Driver Hours & Working Time Regulations**
2. **Vehicle Safety Standards (MOT, inspections)**
3. **Tachograph Requirements**
4. **O-Licence Conditions**
5. **Load Security**
6. **Driver CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence)**

Non-compliance can result in:

- **Fixed penalties:** £50-£300 per offence
- **Traffic Commissioner hearings:** O-licence suspension or revocation
- **Driver bans:** 28-day driving prohibition notices
- **Vehicle impoundment:** Immediate prohibition notices
- **Criminal prosecution:** Unlimited fines for serious breaches

1. Driver Hours Rules 2026

EU/GB Drivers' Hours Rules

Daily driving limit: 9 hours (extendable to 10 hours twice per week)

Weekly driving limit: 56 hours

Fortnightly driving limit: 90 hours

Daily rest: 11 hours (reducible to 9 hours three times per week)

Weekly rest: 45 hours (reducible to 24 hours every other week)

Working Time Directive

Maximum working week: 48 hours (averaged over 17 weeks)

Maximum night work: 10 hours in 24 hours

Breaks: 30 minutes after 6 hours of work (45 minutes after 9 hours)

Common Violations & Penalties

Offence	Penalty
Exceeding daily driving limit	£200 fixed penalty
Insufficient daily rest	£300 fixed penalty
Tachograph tampering	Unlimited fine + criminal record
No driver card	£200 fixed penalty

Pro tip: Digital tachograph data is automatically downloaded during DVSA roadside checks. Drivers can't "forget" their card anymore—the DVSA officer will know immediately if you've exceeded hours.

2. Vehicle Checks & Inspections

Daily Walk-Around Checks

Drivers must complete a **daily vehicle defect report** covering:

- Tyres (tread depth, pressure, damage)
- Lights (all functions working)
- Brakes (air pressure, responsiveness)
- Steering (play, alignment)
- Mirrors (clean, secure)
- Windscreen (cracks, wipers)
- Load security (straps, curtains, tailgate)

DVSA requirement: Records must be kept for **15 months**.

Periodic Inspections

MOT frequency:

- HGVs: Annual MOT
- Trailers over 3.5 tonnes: Annual MOT

Safety inspections:

- Every **6 weeks** for vehicles over 3.5 tonnes under O-licence

Prohibition Notices

If a DVSA examiner finds a defect during a roadside check:

- **S-marked defect (dangerous):** Immediate prohibition—vehicle cannot move
- **Advisory defect:** Must be fixed within 10 days

Cost of prohibition: £1,000+ (recovery, lost loads, customer penalties)

3. Tachograph Compliance

Digital Tachograph Requirements

Data downloads:

- **Vehicle unit:** Every 90 days
- **Driver card:** Every 28 days

DVSA can request:

- Last 365 days of tachograph data
- Driver card data going back 28 days

Common Tachograph Offences

1. **No driver card:** £200 fixed penalty
2. **Using another driver's card:** Criminal offence, unlimited fine
3. **Tachograph not calibrated:** £100 fixed penalty (calibration required every 2 years)
4. **Infringement not analysed:** Traffic Commissioner action

Automation tip: Modern fleet software automatically downloads tachograph data, flags infringements, and generates compliance reports—saving 5+ hours per week per transport manager.

4. O-Licence Compliance

Operator Licence Conditions

All haulage operators must maintain:

1. **Financial standing:** £8,000 for first vehicle + £4,500 per additional vehicle
2. **Professional competence:** CPC holder as Transport Manager
3. **Good reputation:** No serious traffic offences
4. **Operating centre:** Adequate parking, maintenance facilities

Traffic Commissioner Powers

The Traffic Commissioner can:

- Issue **improvement notices** (fix issues within 28 days)
- **Suspend O-licence** (temporary loss of operating authority)
- **Revoke O-licence** (permanent loss—business closure)
- **Reduce fleet size** (limit number of vehicles)

Red flags that trigger investigations:

- Multiple DVSA prohibitions

- Driver hours infringements
 - Maintenance failures
 - Financial issues (unpaid fines, VAT arrears)
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5. Load Security

DVSA Load Security Guidelines

Securing methods:

- Straps rated for load weight (check label)
- Minimum 2 straps per load section
- Curtains in good condition (no tears)
- Tailgate secured with pins

Common failures:

- Insufficient straps (£100 fixed penalty)
- Damaged straps (prohibition notice)
- Unsecured pallets (£300 fixed penalty + load shift liability)

Real-world example: A Class 1 driver was fined £300 and given a prohibition notice for having 3 straps on a 20-tonne load when 6 were required. The load didn't move, but DVSA doesn't care—it's about potential risk.

6. Driver CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence)

Requirements

All professional HGV drivers must complete:

- **35 hours of periodic training** every 5 years
- Courses must be DVSA-approved
- Topics: driver hours, load security, fuel efficiency, first aid, etc.

Penalty for expired CPC: £1,000 fine + driver cannot legally drive HGVs

Renewal tip: Book CPC courses 6 months before expiry—popular courses fill up fast.

How Fleet Management Software Automates DVSA Compliance

Manual compliance is a full-time job. Here's how modern software (like **TitanFleet**) automates 80% of the admin:

1. Automated Driver Hours Monitoring

- Real-time alerts when drivers approach limits
- Automatic tachograph downloads (28-day/90-day)
- Infringement reports sent to transport managers
- **Saves:** 5 hours/week per transport manager

2. Digital Vehicle Checks

- Drivers complete checks on smartphone/tablet
- Photos of defects uploaded instantly
- Automatic defect escalation to maintenance team
- 15-month record keeping (DVSA-compliant)
- **Saves:** 3 hours/week per driver (no paperwork)

3. Maintenance Scheduling

- Automatic reminders for 6-week inspections, MOTs, calibrations
- Service history stored digitally (no lost paperwork)
- Prohibition notice tracking
- **Saves:** 2 hours/week per transport manager

4. GPS Tracking & Route Optimization

- Proof of delivery times (disputes with customers)
- Driver location monitoring (safety, efficiency)
- Fuel efficiency reports
- **Saves:** £500+/month in fuel costs

5. Compliance Reporting

- One-click reports for DVSA audits

- Traffic Commissioner hearing prep
 - O-licence renewal documentation
 - **Saves:** 10+ hours during audits
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DVSA Roadside Check: What to Expect

What DVSA Officers Check

1. **Driver card & tachograph data** (last 28 days)
2. **Vehicle defects** (walk-around inspection)
3. **Load security** (straps, curtains, tailgate)
4. **Driver CPC card** (valid, not expired)
5. **O-licence disc** (displayed in windscreen)
6. **Maintenance records** (if requested)

How to Pass Every Time

✅ Before leaving yard:

- Complete daily vehicle check (record defects)
- Check driver hours (don't start if you'll exceed limits)
- Verify load security (extra straps = peace of mind)

✅ During check:

- Be polite, cooperative (DVSA officers are doing their job)
- Have driver card, CPC card, O-licence disc ready
- Don't argue—if there's a defect, acknowledge it

✅ After check:

- Fix any advisory defects within 10 days
 - Report prohibition notices to transport manager immediately
 - Learn from mistakes (update training, procedures)
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DVSA Compliance Checklist for 2026

Daily:

- ☐ Driver hours checked before departure
- ☐ Vehicle defect check completed (recorded)
- ☐ Load secured (straps, curtains, tailgate)

Weekly:

- ☐ Tachograph infringements reviewed
- ☐ Defect reports actioned
- ☐ Driver hours reports sent to transport manager

Monthly:

- ☐ Driver card downloads (28 days)
- ☐ Maintenance schedules reviewed
- ☐ CPC expiry dates checked

Every 90 Days:

- ☐ Vehicle unit tachograph downloads
- ☐ 6-week safety inspections completed

Annually:

- ☐ MOT renewals
 - ☐ Tachograph calibrations (every 2 years)
 - ☐ O-licence renewal (every 5 years)
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Conclusion: Compliance is Easier Than You Think

DVSA compliance sounds overwhelming, but it boils down to three things:

1. **Driver hours:** Don't exceed limits (use software alerts)
2. **Vehicle safety:** Fix defects immediately (digital checks)
3. **Record keeping:** Store everything for 15 months (automated)

As a Class 1 driver who's built fleet management software, I can tell you this: **the companies that get fined are the ones still using paper logbooks and hoping for the best.** The companies that pass every DVSA check? They've automated compliance and sleep better at night.

Want to automate your DVSA compliance? Try TitanFleet free for 14 days—no credit card required. Built by a Class 1 driver who understands the pain of manual compliance.

Related Articles

- [How to Pass a DVSA Roadside Check Every Time](#)
- [Driver Hours Rules Explained: EU vs UK Regulations](#)
- [O-Licence Compliance: Avoid Traffic Commissioner Hearings](#)
- [Digital Tachographs: Download Requirements & Penalties](#)
- [Fleet Maintenance Schedules: 6-Week Inspections Guide](#)

About the Author

Jon Byrne is a Class 1 HGV driver and founder of TitanFleet, fleet management software built by hauliers, for hauliers. With 10+ years on the road and countless DVSA checks under his belt, Jon understands the compliance challenges UK operators face daily.

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