

# Introduction to VOSA for Operators







VOSA's work has a vital part to play in improving road safety, environmental standards and reducing vehicle crime.

# It is responsible for:

- Processing applications for licences to operate lorries and buses and registering local bus services.
- Operating and administering testing schemes for all vehicles, including supervising the MOT testing scheme.
- Enforcing the law on vehicles to ensure they comply with legal standards and regulations through roadside checks and related enforcement activities.
- Enforcing drivers' hours and licensing requirements and HGV and PSV maintenance arrangements.
- Supporting Traffic Commissioners to help them make informed decisions on operator licensing and bus registration requirements.
- Providing training and advice for commercial operators.
- Investigating vehicle accidents, collisions and recalls.

The Vehicle and Operator Services Agency's (VOSA's) activities support the following people and organisations: the Road Haulage and Public Service Vehicle industries; vocational drivers; MOT garages; private vehicle owners and the related trade associations; vehicle manufacturers and importers; the Traffic Commissioners; the Courts; the Police and the Public.

This leaflet is to help you understand the work of VOSA, and how it can help you and your business. It gives you information on operator licences, the annual test for your vehicle and what to expect when you meet VOSA at the roadside.

More detailed information can be found in the HGV/PSV Guide for Operators or on our website : **www.vosa.gov.uk** 

# **Operator Licences**

#### Who needs an operator's licence?

You need an operator's licence to carry goods (or burden) connected with any trade or business if you "use" a motor vehicle on a road with:

- a gross plated weight of more than 3.5 tonnes; or
- if it has no gross plated weight, an unladen weight of more than 1525kg.

# You will need a PSV operator's licence if your vehicle :

- carries passengers by road for payment (known as hire or reward); and
- is classed as a Public Service Vehicle (PSV).

#### You are the user of the vehicle if:

- You are the driver and the owner, or the vehicle is in your lawful possession under an agreement for hire, hire purchase, or loan.
- The driver is your servant or agent.

**Note**: YOU NEED AN OPERATOR'S LICENCE IF YOU ONLY USE A VEHICLE FOR A SHORT PERIOD, EVEN JUST ONE DAY.

If in any doubt about whether or not you need a licence contact your nearest Traffic Area Office.

#### How many vehicles should I apply to use?

Your licence, if issued, will authorise you to use a maximum total number of motor vehicles and, if applicable, trailers, including semi-trailers. The number you apply for should take into account the number of vehicles you intend to use straight away and allow for some extra motor vehicles to cover increases in business and emergencies, such as breakdowns. This is particularly important if you use only a few motor vehicles.

# How do I apply for a licence?

To apply for an operators licence you need to complete an application form, available from your Traffic Area Office (TAO) or accessed by clicking on the application forms section on the VOSA homepage. The completed form, with the application fee, must be sent to the TAO in whose area you have an 'operating centre' (for more details about operating centres please look on the VOSA website or telephone our national number).

Supporting documentation showing financial status and maintenance arrangements needs to be provided. Evidence of professional competence will also be required for some licences. An advert in a newspaper local to the place where the vehicles will be parked when not in use is also required in support of an application for a Heavy Goods Vehicle operators' licence. The advertisement must be published in the newspaper 21 days before the application is received by the Traffic Commissioner and ending 21 days after that date.

If you are not sure how to fill in the form, contact the licensing team at your local Traffic Area Office for help or, a Trade Association e.g. The Freight Transport Association, The Road Haulage Association or the Confederation of Passenger Transport (for details contact our national number or visit the VOSA website).

## When should I apply for a licence?

You should apply at least 8 weeks before the date when the licence is needed. This allows time for the Traffic Commissioner to make any necessary enquiries. In straightforward cases a licence should be issued within the 8 weeks.

**Note**: IT IS ILLEGAL TO OPERATE BEFORE A LICENCE IS ISSUED OR INTERIM AUTHORITY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY THE TRAFFIC COMMISSIONER.

# **Testing of vehicles**

As the government agency responsible for vehicle safety and environmental standards, the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency carries out annual testing of lorries, buses and coaches to make sure they meet minimum road safety and environmental standards.

Testing of lorries, buses and coaches is available either at one of VOSA's 91 test stations or at designated premises that have been approved for testing. (For details look on the VOSA website or call our national number).

#### What to expect when taking a vehicle to the test station

Most VOSA test stations are built to a standard design – with a reception area and a number of test lanes. You must make a booking before presenting your vehicle for a test. Bookings can be made directly at any station by phone, fax or letter or they can be booked centrally by calling the national number. You will be asked for the vehicle registration number, vehicle class, how many axles it has (for lorries) and how many seats it has (for buses/coaches).

If you have an appointment letter bring it with you together with the last Annual Test Certificate for that vehicle. For lorries you should also bring the 'office copy' of the Department for Transport plate.

The vehicle presenter needs to stay with the vehicle throughout the test.

The test consists of four distinct parts:

Stage A: Topside (usually outside)

Stage B: Underside (over the pit)

Stage C: Lights

Stage D: Roller Brake Test

At intervals during the test the inspector will ask you to do certain things with the controls of the vehicle – such as rocking the steering and depressing the brake pedal. If you are unsure of what the inspector means or have not been to one of our test stations before, please let the inspector know.

We also provide a number of other vehicle inspection services. These include Reduced Pollution Certificates (RPC), TIR (vehicles carrying goods sealed for customs purposes), ADR (certification of vehicles for use under international arrangements for carriage of dangerous goods) and notifiable alterations (the mandatory inspection of vehicles that have been modified). Phone our national number for details of the services we provide.

# **Roadworthiness & Traffic Enforcement**

#### What to expect if you are stopped at a road check

VOSA's roadworthiness and traffic enforcement work involves carrying out roadside spot checks on commercial and other vehicles for compliance with regulations relating to; safety and environmental standards, overloading, driver's hours, operator licensing, vehicle licensing and vocational drivers' licences.

VOSA's specialist enforcement staff are either, Vehicle Examiners, (VEs) responsible for checking the mechanical condition of a vehicle, or Traffic Examiners, (TEs) responsible for checking tachographs, drivers' hours regulations, vehicle weight, licensing and other documentation.

Checks are held all over the country, either at the roadside or at permanent sites such as weighbridges. Vehicles selected for examination are directed into the check site either by specialist VOSA staff or by a police officer. The vehicle will then be examined.



#### Roadworthiness Enforcement Action

For non compliant vehicles enforcement action is taken by using a Prohibition Notice (PG9) prohibiting vehicles from use, or by prosecuting drivers and vehicle operators and reporting to the Traffic Commissioner for Operator Licensing action.

Vehicle Examiners use the 'Categorisation of Defects on Road Vehicles' at the roadside checks. This provides guidance on the action to take when roadworthiness defects are found during vehicle inspections. Copies of this document can be purchased from VOSA.

If significant defects are found, an immediate prohibition will be issued which prevents further use of the vehicle. In cases in which a defect is not considered to be an immediate risk, a delayed prohibition will be issued. This allows the continued use of the vehicle until the prohibition comes into force, usually up to 10 days from the date that the prohibition was issued.

Details about how to clear a prohibition are given on the reverse of the prohibition notice. Clearance will usually be by a full or partial test at a VOSA test station.

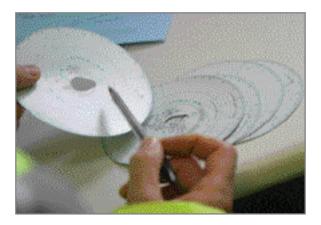


#### **Traffic Enforcement Action**

Prohibitions can be issued by Traffic Examiner's for matters relating to weight, drivers' hours and records, hazardous goods and visual construction and use (such as length, insecure loads etc).

If during the check an offence is found for which the driver and/or operator may be prosecuted, the driver will be advised at the roadside that he will be reported for the offence. This may subsequently lead to prosecution.

Details of prohibitions issued are copied to the Licensing Authority/ Traffic Commissioner.



#### **VOSA and the Traffic Commissions**

There are seven Traffic Commissioners, appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport. They have responsibility in their Area for the licensing of operators of HGVs, PSVs, and for the registration of local bus services. A Traffic commissioner can curtail, revoke, or suspend licences on the basis of prohibitions, convictions or failure to comply with the conditions of holding a licence, including the requirement to have arrangements for ensuring adequate maintenance. All Commissioners are statutorily independent in their licensing functions and are supported in carrying out these functions by VOSA staff.

# **Training**

VOSA's Commercial Projects Unit offers courses benefiting everyone in the industry concerned with safety, quality and efficiency.

Courses are delivered at many locations around the country. Alternatively training can be delivered in-house at customers' premises and tailored to meet their needs.

#### Courses include:

Inspection Standards and Procedures
Refresher Inspection
Roadside Check/Spot Check
Air Brakes
Driver Daily Checks
Operator and Driver Courses (Tachographs)

## For further details please contact:

VOSA, Commercial Projects Unit on 0117 954 3359

We also offer other tests including voluntary brake, headlamp and smoke emissions tests. Manuals covering all aspects of operating and maintaining vehicles are available from VOSA test stations, or from our National Number.



# **VOSA Enforcement Contact Points**

Area Offices are open from 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday. For queries relating to our enforcement work and the MOT scheme please contact;

Northern Scotland		01463 235 505
West & SW Scotland		0141 772 3405
SE Scotland		01506 445 200
Cumbria & Lancs		01228 531 751
Gt. Manchester & Derby	shire	0161 947 1050
Merseyside & Cheshire		0151 546 6854
Staffs & Shropshire		01785 760 152
Central & SW Midlands		0121 783 6665
Wales		01443 224 771
Bristol & Gloucester		0117 966 2855
South West		01392 279 564
Wessex		01489 790 540
Southern Central		0208 665 5715
South East		01634 372 722
Metropolitan		0208 842 3230
Herts & Essex		01708 868 229
East Anglia		01473 212 276
East Midlands		0116 276 6381
Lincs & Cambs		01733 263 423
Notts & South Yorks		0114 269 2334
Humberside		01472 242 332
West & North Yorks		0113 282 1156
Tyne & Tees		0191 236 4286

# **VOSA Testing Contact Points**

All test stations try to open at times to suit local needs - in some cases this includes weekend & early/late opening.

Opening hours are displayed at each station. All full-time stations are open between 0800 - 1700 Mon to Thurs, and 0800 - 1630 on Fri, except on Bank Holidays.

For queries relating to the testing of lorries and buses, please contact your regional office;

Scotland		01738 580 327
North West		0151 547 4445
North East		0113 282 5060
Midlands		0114 269 3691
Wales & We	st Midlands	01902 397 722
East		0208 803 7733
South East		01489 785 522
South West		01823 282 525

# **VOSA Traffic Area Contact Points**

For enquiries relating to operator licensing or bus registration, please contact your regional traffic area office; 8.30am - 5.00pm, Mon-Fri.

Е	Edinburgh		0131 200 4955
L	_eeds		0113 254 3291
٧	Vales & We	st Midlands	0121 609 6813
(	Cambridge		01792 454 390
Е	Bristol		0117 900 8577
Е	astbourne		01323 452 473

For more information, please visit our Website: www.vosa.gov.uk

# **VOSA Headquarters**

Berkeley House Croydon Street Bristol BS5 0DA

Tel: 0870 6060 440 Fax: 01792 454313

enquiries@vosa.gov.uk

www.vosa.gov.uk