



# Minibuses and Drivers' Hours

## Introduction

This information sheet helps to explain what steps the renter should take to ensure trouble-free rental of minibuses and goods vehicles.

Legislation for tachographs is being modernised so that new technology can be used to ensure the security of recording drivers' hours. All vehicles, over 3.5 tonnes, registered after 1 May 2006 are legally required to have a digital tachograph fitted.

Minibuses with more than eight passenger seats registered after 1 May 2006 also need to be fitted with digital tachographs. For minibuses without tachographs a digital tachograph will have to be fitted if the minibus was registered after 1 May 2006. If registered before this date, then either an analogue or a digital tachograph can be fitted. Either way, a tachograph will need to be operational in minibuses being used in the UK after December 2007. However, these conditions only apply where the vehicle is being used either commercially or outside the UK (see below).

## Minibuses Travelling in the UK

If you are planning to rent a minibus in the UK, after 11 April 2007, you will need to observe EU Drivers' Hours rules and use a tachograph where the vehicle is being used for commercial purposes. The primary exemptions are; private individuals and Section 19 and 22 Permit Holders.

Where a section 19 or 22 Permit (issued by organisations concerned with education, religion, social welfare, recreation or other activities of benefit to the community) is being used and the minibus is being driven by an employee driver then domestic drivers' hours rules must be observed.

All private minibus use in the UK is exempt from any drivers' hours rules.

Frequent renters of minibuses who operate commercially will need to familiarise themselves with the drivers' hours legislation and ensure they have a driver card to enable them to use a digital tachograph. Driver cards can be obtained from the DVLA at a cost of £38.

## Minibuses Travelling Abroad

If you are planning to take a minibus with more than eight passengers abroad, then you should check if the rental company firstly will permit you to take the vehicle outside the UK. If they do, then you should establish whether the vehicle has an analogue or digital tachograph. When travelling in mainland Europe it's a legal requirement for you to record your drivers' hours on a tachograph.

If the vehicle has an analogue tachograph it is likely that the rental company will provide you with paper discs to use in the tachograph along with basic instructions on how to use it.

Where a digital tachograph is fitted a driver card is used to record your hours and the rental company may be able to provide some basic instruction on its use. The tachograph will not work without a driver card and if you do not have one it is essential to obtain it from the DVLA ahead of your rental taking place.

Ultimately, it is the driver's responsibility to ensure that he/she is observing the drivers' hours rules and using the tachograph correctly. Driver's hours regulations can be found at [www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk).

### **What is a driver card?**

The driver card is a smart card used to store drivers' hours, journey and vehicle information and has an average memory capacity of 28 working days.

Driver cards are only available from the DVLA. Application form D777B can be obtained from your DVLA local office or by calling **08708 501074**. Cards should arrive within two weeks of the application however, these timescales may be extended in busy periods. If the driver has a photocard driving licence the process is faster as DVLA already has the driver's ID on file.

Driver cards are valid for five years and cost £38.

### **How does a digital tachograph work?**

A digital tachograph stores journey, vehicle and driver data and additionally, records it separately on a driver card (see above). The card remains in the digital tachograph while the vehicle is being driven. Transport operators must periodically download data from the digital tachograph via a company card, (see below), and from driver cards and check that the drivers' hours rules have been complied with.

### **What is a company card?**

The company card is a locking card issued to a transport operator and used to access data stored in the digital tachograph memory. The card does not store any data itself, but locks the data belonging to the transport operator against any unauthorised access. Company cards are applied for in the same way as driver cards and the costs are the same.

### **What are the European drivers' hours?**

In using the tachograph you need to observe the European Drivers' Hours rules, which basically are:

- Maximum daily driving time is nine hours
- You should not drive more than four to five hours consecutive hours without a break
- A break should be 45 minutes in duration.

### **Where can I get more information?**

- VOSA (Vehicle Operator Services Agency)  
[www.vosa.gov.uk](http://www.vosa.gov.uk)
- DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency)  
[www.dvla.gov.uk](http://www.dvla.gov.uk)
- Department for Transport  
[www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk)

