



Vehicle & Operator
Services Agency

LGV DRIVER

Your van: best practice guide



 Saving lives, safer roads, cutting crime, protecting the environment

Contents

Foreword by VOSA/DSA Chief Executive	3
Foreword by the Senior Traffic Commissioner	4
Introduction	5
Vans and light goods vehicles (LGVs)	6
Operator checklist	7
Driver checklist	9
Enforcement	10
Van walkaround checklist	11

Foreword by VOSA/DSA Chief Executive



This Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) guide provides advice for drivers and operators in the van (LGV) industry. It is intended only to offer general help and isn't a legal document.

I think it is a real step forward in helping to ensure our roads are safe for people to use and to improve industry compliance.

I am pleased that the guide has been produced in partnership with the Trade and takes advantage of their best practice. I hope it will become an integral part of operator and driver compliance regimes.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alastair Peoples". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alastair Peoples
VOSA/DSA Chief Executive

Foreword by the Senior Traffic Commissioner



I am delighted to endorse this VOSA publication, which provides valuable advice and guidance for those using light goods vehicles.

It has recently become clear that unfortunately many LGVs and their drivers are not as safe as they should be.

With the large growth in this sector it is vital that all operators of commercial vehicles - whether under or over 3.5 tonnes - ensure that their fleet is roadworthy and that their drivers are not only complying with the law but also professionally trained.

I therefore encourage all those using LGVs to read this advice carefully and seek other specialist industry advice.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beverley Bell". The script is cursive and fluid.

Beverley Bell
Senior Traffic Commissioner for Great Britain

Introduction



With more than 3.2 million vans used for business across the UK, there are 7 times more light goods vehicles than lorries on our roads.

Additionally, VOSA stops approximately 10,800 vans each year as part of its targeted roadside checks at a cost to their owners and operators of up to £4,000 per day per vehicle.

As an owner or operator, it doesn't take long to figure out that running a fleet of vans which doesn't comply with the rules and regulations can be a costly business.

This guide provides best practice advice* helping you to keep your van or fleet up and running - helping to remove the fear of your vehicles being declared unroadworthy and your business facing avoidable financial loss.

The following figures lead to millions in lost revenue each year and are having an adverse effect on the reputation of van operators and drivers:

- ▶ 93% - proportion of vans found to be overloaded
- ▶ 63% - proportion of vans found with serious mechanical defects
- ▶ 50% - average roadworthiness prohibition rate
- ▶ 50% - failure rate for Class 7 MOTs

In view of these figures, VOSA recognises an urgent need for improvement which in turn will help to reduce the van sector's costs and improve operating standards.

Uncertainty surrounding the legal requirements involved in operating roadworthy and cost-effective fleets has led to a rise in non-compliance.

In order to make improvements, it's advisable to take note and adopt the simple advice on offer within this guide and you'll soon be on the road to running a cost-effective, efficient and compliant van operation.

So don't let these numbers drag you, your organisation and your bottom line down and find out more about van best practice.

** This guide is only aimed at offering general help and isn't a legal document. If you're unsure about any aspects covered in this guide you should consider seeking independent legal advice.*

Vans and light goods vehicles (LGVs)

Vans used for hire or reward come under a range of commercial vehicle classifications based on their gross vehicle weight but are generally classed as LGVs.

All vans with a gross vehicle weight of less than 3.5 tonnes are categorised as either Class 4 or Class 7 under the MOT scheme.

Meanwhile, any van with a gross vehicle weight of more than 3.5 tonnes comes under the authority of a [goods vehicle operator's licence](#), bringing with it increased regulation and costs.

Such a licence includes a requirement to ensure various compliance systems are in place which will satisfy the [Traffic Commissioner](#).

As a LGV operator, you should be vigilant about not breaking the gross and axle weight limits of your vehicle, remembering that the [total vehicle weight](#) includes the combined weight of your van's driver, passengers, load and fuel.

Although officially known as light goods vehicles (LGVs) within the UK, vans are known as light commercial vehicles (LCVs) across the rest of the EU.

However, our national use of the term LGVs should not be confused with the official EU term for vehicles with a gross weight of more than 3.5 tonnes - large goods vehicles which are also known as LGVs across Europe.

For more information about the MOT scheme please read [Getting an MOT](#) and for goods vehicle operator licensing please read [Being a goods vehicle operator](#).



Operator checklist

Drive down your costs by increasing your vehicle, fleet and driver compliance with the help of this operator checklist:

Van checks

- ▶ carry out daily 'walkaround' checks before using your vans and record any defects
- ▶ rectify any major defects before your vans are sent out and record your repairs

Van maintenance

- ▶ service your vehicles and fleet to at least the minimum standard in line with the manufacturer's guidelines
- ▶ if your vans are subject to demanding work, get qualified service people to frequently check safety critical components such as brakes
- ▶ make sure your vans are always insured, taxed and MOT'd and document this process - for example, with the help of a wall planner

Van records

- ▶ store defect, maintenance, rectification and servicing records for at least 15 months to demonstrate an effective maintenance system

Van condition

- ▶ keep your vans clean and tidy to show your professionalism and increase your fleet's resale value

Van suitability

- ▶ use the right vans with the right size, load capability and equipment for the job
- ▶ do not load vans beyond their maximum weights for their train, gross or axles - this weight includes the combined weight of your van's driver, passengers, load and fuel
- ▶ maintain fitted specialist equipment such as tail lifts and tow bars

Manage risks and costs

- ▶ fit a 70mph limiter on vans used on the motorway - most vans use 25% more fuel at 80mph than at 70mph
- ▶ fit parking sensors to protect pedestrians, employees and your vans in crowded urban areas

Driver identification

- ▶ know who is driving your vans for work by always taking up references from previous employers
- ▶ take more than one form of identification from drivers and cross check them with their driving licence details
- ▶ make sure you follow the same identification process for agency drivers as you're responsible for them when they're driving your vans



Driver licensing

- ▶ check all your drivers have a valid driving licence for driving your vans and keep copies on file
- ▶ check driving licence details periodically - especially for drivers with 6 points or more
- ▶ check everything through the [DVLA](#) with the driver's prior consent

Driver capability

- ▶ assess all newly qualified and newly employed drivers to make sure they're capable of driving your vans
- ▶ provide extra driver training so they can safely handle larger non-car based vans
- ▶ record assessments and training to show you've addressed any driver-related risks

Driver behaviour

- ▶ regularly check your drivers are fit to drive and make sure they're free from the adverse effects of alcohol and drugs
- ▶ ask your drivers to make a written statement declaring they're entitled to drive and have no driving related health issues
- ▶ introduce regular eye checks for your drivers to make sure they have no visual impairments which could affect their driving over time
- ▶ log and analyse all driver incidents including any disciplinary action or training

Driver compliance

- ▶ make sure your drivers fully understand the requirements to comply with the relevant van and driving legislation - including [drivers' hours rules](#), the [Working Time Directive](#), [speed limits](#), [mobile phone use](#), vehicle loading and [towing](#)

Driver checklist

Pass this driver checklist on to your drivers to increase your van and business compliance.

Driving licences

- ▶ make sure your driving licence is valid, up to date and includes a [photo card](#)
- ▶ make sure you're entitled to drive Category B vans up to 3.5 tonnes, Category B and E for most 3.5 tonnes van and trailer combinations and Category C1 for vans up to 7.5 tonnes

Driving regulations

- ▶ comply with the [drivers' hours](#) rules relevant to the van you're driving
- ▶ comply with [GB domestic hours regulations](#) for vans of 3.5 tonnes or less
- ▶ comply with [EC drivers' hours](#) and tachograph rules for vehicles with trailers
- ▶ comply with [working time regulations](#) - specifically mobile workers' regulations for vehicles over 3.5 tonnes

Vehicle loading

- ▶ load vans so that their maximum weights - including axles which are stamped on its identification plate by its manufacturers - are not exceeded. If your van is overloaded you could face a fixed penalty fine or court appearance
- ▶ safely secure your van's load using the appropriate strapping - the weight of the load is not enough to keep it safely secured. If your van is overloaded you could face a fixed penalty fine or court appearance

Driving your van

- ▶ familiarise yourself with the van you're going to be driving - larger vehicles will drive in a different way to car-based vehicles
- ▶ familiarise yourself with your van's safety features such as anti-lock brakes and stability controls
- ▶ drive your van within the relevant [speed limits](#) for the roads you're on and the type and size of van you're driving
- ▶ don't drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs as it may impair your ability to control your van

Enforcement

Operators are increasingly noticing the negative effects non-compliance is having on their business.

VOSA is concentrating its efforts on dealing with this problem and encouraging all van drivers to take a 30 minute rest for every 4.5 hours of driving.

This is in line with the GB domestic drivers' hours rules and adopting this approach alongside the guidance in our various checklists will greatly improve your compliance rates.

More than half of the 10,000 vans stopped by VOSA enforcement teams each year are found to have serious roadworthiness defects - and many of those are also overloaded.

If you're driving a van - and are found to be in breach of the regulations, VOSA has the power to:

- ▶ issue fixed penalties in respect of both non-endorsable and endorsable offences
- ▶ prohibit vans of all sizes from further use where serious mechanical defects, overloading and drivers' hours offences are detected
- ▶ request immediate financial deposits from non-UK resident offenders - equivalent to on-the-spot fines
- ▶ immobilise vehicles in cases where vehicles have been prohibited from continuing a journey, or in cases where drivers decline to pay fixed penalties or deposits

Fines range from £100 up to £5,000, with operators and drivers of vans over 3.5 tonnes facing up to 2 years imprisonment for drivers' hours and tachograph offences.

By adopting the advice given in this best practice guide, enforcement action and the associated penalties can all be easily avoided, ensuring your business isn't going to be damaged by poorly operated vehicles.



Van walkaround checklist

You should always monitor the vehicle you are driving as part of your daily routine and report any suspected problems or defects.

LIGHTS

Check that:

- ▶ all lights and indicators work correctly
- ▶ all lenses are present, clean and are the correct colour
- ▶ stop lamps come on when the service brake is applied and go out when released
- ▶ marker lights are present and work
- ▶ all dashboard warning lamps work correctly including:
 - ▷ ABS
 - ▷ airbags (SRS)
 - ▷ EPS
 - ▷ full beam headlamp warning lamp
 - ▷ parking brake warning lamp

HORN AND STEERING

Check that:

- ▶ horn control is easily accessible from driver's seat
- ▶ horn works when its control is operated
- ▶ steering has no excessive play

WASHERS AND WIPERS

Check that:

- ▶ wipers move continually when switched on
- ▶ wiper blades are not so deteriorated that they don't clear the windscreen effectively when used with washers
- ▶ washers point at the windscreen and are operational
- ▶ washer fluid is topped up

MIRRORS AND GLASS

Check that:

- ▶ all mirrors that should be there are properly aligned and secure
- ▶ your view of the road in all directions isn't obscured by damaged or discoloured glass or obstructions such as stickers

SEATS AND SEATBELTS

Check that:

- ▶ seats are secure
- ▶ seatbelts operate correctly and are free from cuts and damage

BRAKES

Check that:

- ▶ foot / service brake works correctly and does not have any excessive travel
- ▶ hand / parking brake works correctly and does not have any excessive travel

BODYWORK AND DOORS

Check that:

- ▶ all doors shut properly and are secure when closed
- ▶ there are no sharp edges or damage
- ▶ no body panels are loose or in danger of falling off

LOAD

Check that:

- ▶ any load is adequately secured
- ▶ van doors have an effective locking device

TOW BARS AND TAIL LIFTS

Check that:

- ▶ tow bar is secure and any trailer is correctly and securely attached with all electrical connections working correctly
- ▶ tail lift is secure and free from damage, functions correctly and the electrics are working correctly

EXHAUST

Check that:

- ▶ exhaust doesn't emit excessive amounts of smoke

FLUIDS, FUEL AND OIL

Check that:

- ▶ brake fluid, engine coolant, engine oil, power steering fluid, windscreen washer fluid and water levels are correct
- ▶ fuel filler cap is securely fitted
- ▶ there are no brake fluid, power steering fluid and water leaks by looking for puddles on the ground - if leaks are detected trace the cause

With the engine on, check:

- ▶ underneath the van for any fuel and oil leaks looking for puddles on the ground

BATTERY

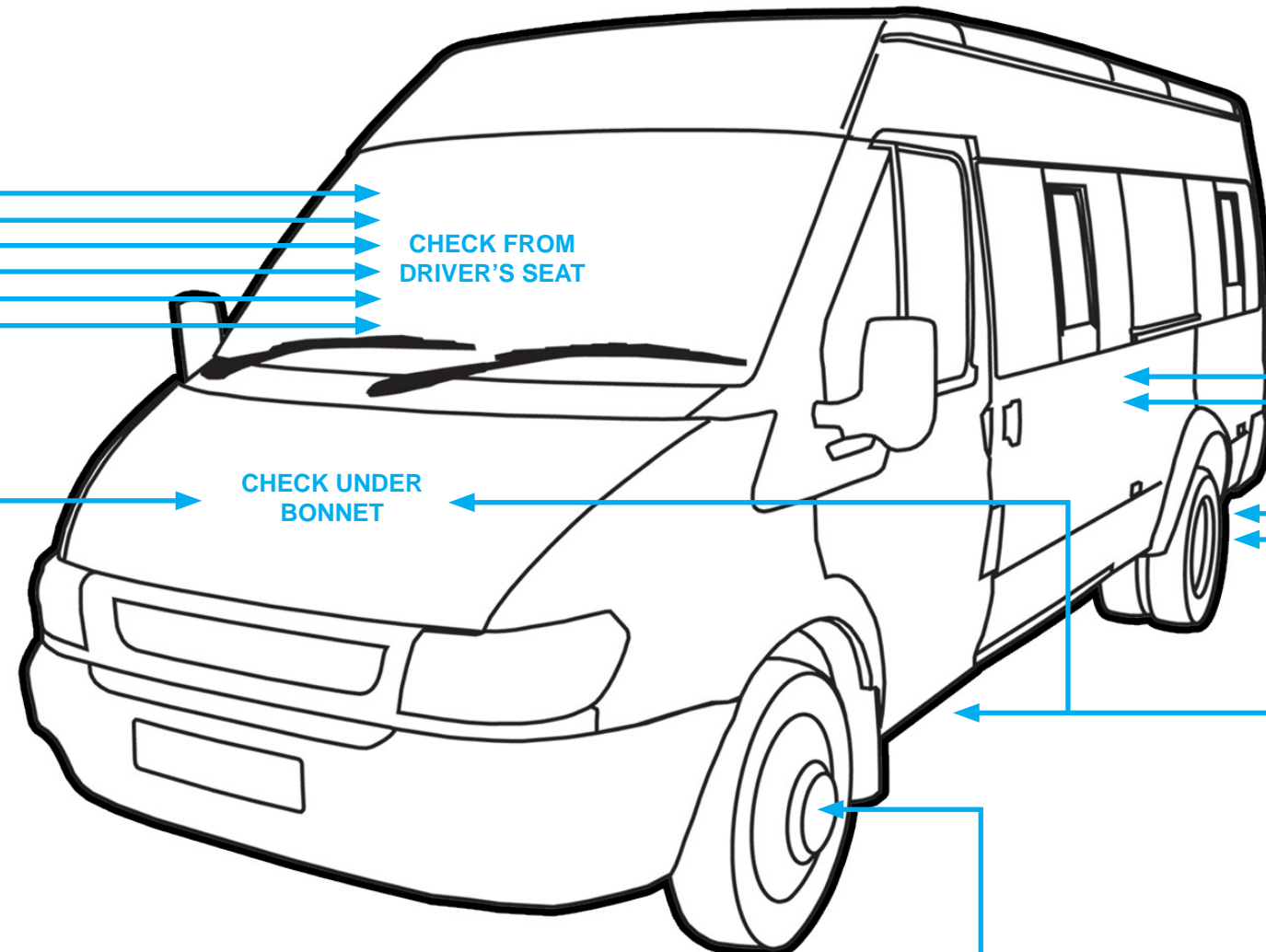
Check that:

- ▶ battery is held securely in place by the correct means and not cables
- ▶ battery is not leaking

Check as much of your tyres and wheels as you can see. There must be:

- ▶ a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm
- ▶ sufficient inflation of each tyre
- ▶ no deep cuts in the sidewall
- ▶ no cord visible anywhere on the tyre
- ▶ no missing or insecure wheel-nuts

Failing to ensure a tyre is safe and legal can result in receiving 3 penalty points on your licence per tyre.



Visit our websites:

for commercial customers and private motorists
www.gov.uk

for corporate information
www.gov.uk/vosa

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