

Appendix

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DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT
Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice Guidance

Vehicle Identification

24. Members of the public can often confuse PHVs with taxis, failing to realise that PHVs are not available for immediate hire and that a PHV driver cannot be hailed. So it is important to distinguish between the two types of vehicle. Possible approaches might be:

- a licence condition that prohibits PHVs from displaying any identification at all apart from the local authority licence plate or disc. The licence plate is a helpful indicator of licensed status and, as such, it helps identification if licence plates are displayed on the front as well as the rear of vehicles. However, requiring some additional clearer form of identification can be seen as best practice. This is for two reasons: firstly, to ensure a more positive statement that the vehicle cannot be hired immediately through the driver; and secondly because it is quite reasonable, and in the interests of the travelling public, for a PHV operator to be able to state on the vehicle the contact details for hiring;
- a licence condition which requires a sign on the vehicle in a specified form. This will often be a sign of a specified size and shape which identifies the operator (with a telephone number for bookings) and the local licensing authority, and which also has some words such as 'pre-booked only'. This approach seems the best practice. It identifies the vehicle as private hire and helps to avoid confusion with a taxi, but also gives useful information to the public wishing to make a booking. It is good practice for vehicle identification for PHVs to include the contact details of the operator.
- Another approach, possibly in conjunction with the previous option, is a requirement for a roof-mounted, permanently illuminated sign with words such as 'pre-booked only'. But it can be argued that any roof-mounted sign, however unambiguous its words, is liable to create confusion with a taxi. So roof-mounted signs on PHVs are not seen as best practice.

Environmental Considerations

25. Local licensing authorities, in discussion with those responsible for environmental health issues, will wish to consider how far their vehicle licensing policies can and should support any local environmental policies that the local authority may have adopted, bearing in mind the need to ensure that the benefits of any policies outweigh the costs (in whatever form). Local authorities may, for example, wish to consider setting vehicle emissions standards for taxis and PHVs. However, local authorities would need to carefully and thoroughly assess the impact of introducing such a policy; for example, the effect on the supply of taxis and PHVs in the area would be an important consideration in deciding the standards, if any, to be set.

Stretched Limousines

26. Local licensing authorities are sometimes asked to license stretched limousines as PHVs. It is suggested that local authorities should approach such requests on the basis that these vehicles have a legitimate role to play in the private hire trade, meeting a public demand. Consistent with this view licence applications involving use of these limousines should not be automatically rejected (for example just because the vehicles may be left-hand drive). The Department is currently revising its guidance on the licensing arrangements for stretched limousines.

27. Imported stretched limousines are normally checked for compliance with British regulations under the Single Vehicle Approval (SVA) inspection regime, before they are registered. A licensing authority might wish to request sight of the SVA certificate to ensure that the vehicle was tested by VOSA before being registered and licensed (taxed) by DVLA. The SVA test verifies that the converted vehicle is built to certain safety and environmental standards (there are some vehicles that have gained registration without an SVA and these may not comply with British regulations).

28. Stretched limousines which clearly have more than 8 passenger seats should not of course be licensed as PHVs because they are outside the licensing regime for PHVs. However, under some

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required to display the plate as issued by each authority, this is an unusual practice and could cause enforcement problems.

** Dual plating should not be permitted where different requirements of design, age, colour or other local conditions apply to each of the local authorities.

** If taximeters are fitted then the fare tariffs should be the same for each local authority licensing the vehicle, so as not to allow a driver to engage the higher tariff when accepting a hiring in a lower tariff area.

If all these conditions can be met then this is an acceptable practice.

ROOF OR OTHER SIGNS (ADVERTISING)

Private hire vehicles should not display a roof sign that suggests the vehicle is a taxi by displaying such words as 'Taxi', 'Hire', or 'Cab' either singularly or as part of another word.

** Any advertising permitted should be controlled and be of an appropriate size and position. This should be approved by the local authority prior to display to ensure any advertisement does not cause offence to the public. It may be that the local authority would wish to include words to the effect that the vehicle is only available if pre-booked in any advertising permitted.

** Any illuminated sign fitted should comply with Vehicle Lighting Regulations, (in other words, not show a red light to the front, or a white light to the rear of the vehicle).

FIRE EXTINGUISHER

** A fire extinguisher should be carried in the vehicle to allow drivers to extinguish small fires.

** The extinguisher should not be located in the passenger compartment where it may cause injury or roll under the pedals, but kept secure in the boot of the vehicle.

** To extinguish fires most commonly encountered in vehicles, the extinguisher should be either a one kilogram dry powder, or a one litre AFFF, both types should have gauges to show the state of charge, and should be manufactured to satisfy relevant BSEN accreditation.

FIRST AID KIT

** As part of Health and Safety at Work legislation, a first aid kit should be carried in the vehicle to enable the driver to administer basic first aid to himself only.

SPARE WHEEL

** A spare wheel should be carried in the vehicle in the allocated place.