

**Public Carriage Office
Transport for London**

PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING

**Vehicle Inspection Criteria
Guidance Notes
(Before Licence Issue)**

Background

Since April 2004, the Public Carriage Office (PCO) has been licensing vehicles used as Private Hire Vehicles (PHV's) in London. In order to be licensed, vehicles are required to meet defined standards and comfort, as set out in the Private Hire Vehicles (London PHV Licences) Regulations 2004. SGS (United Kingdom) Ltd have been appointed by PCO to carry out licensing inspections.

Keeping your appointment

You should aim to be at the testing station 10 minutes prior to your private hire vehicle inspection. **Please be aware your application fee may be forfeited:**

- If you are late and cannot be fitted in;
- If you cancel the appointment without giving 48 hours notice (excluding weekends and bank holidays) before the date of the inspection;
- If you fail to turn up for the inspection; or
- If you re-arrange the inspection appointment without giving 48 hours notice.

Required documents

When presenting a vehicle for inspection, the person presenting the vehicle **must** bring with them the following **original** documents:

- The existing PHV licence (if applicable)
- V5c DVLA Vehicle Registration Certificate or the new Vehicle Automotive First Registration & Licence (AFRL) scheme certificate issued by the selling dealership
- MoT certificate for vehicles over 12 months old at the date of inspection. The MoT **must** have been issued not more than 14 days from the date of the licensing inspection (ie we will count back 14 days from the date of the licensing inspection, where the date of the MoT inspection is day 1)
- **certificate** of insurance, insurance cover note for the vehicle or insurance bond for vehicles insured under a group cover. Note: group cover must be accompanied by an insurance schedule issued by either the broker or the insurance company.
- current vehicle road fund licence (ie valid tax disc)
- any other relevant documentation relating to the vehicle, where appropriate, such as Single Vehicle Approval (SVA), evidence of vehicle modification or adaptation etc

Our vehicle inspector will first want to confirm that the documents required above are accurate and relate to the vehicle presented for inspection.

Tips to help ensure your vehicle passes first time

Electrical equipment – Ensure that:

- any electrical equipment such as two-way radio/mobile phone fittings/CCTV etc does not encroach the front passenger area and that any wiring, fixtures or fittings do not present a hazard to the driver or any passengers. (Equipment securely fitted under the passenger seat or in the glove-box will be permitted)
- wiring is correctly fused and has been installed in accordance with the industry guidelines. (Usually direct to the battery or the auxiliary side of the fuse box).

Tinted windows

- For vehicles first used before 1st April 1985 the front windscreen and windows to either side of the driver must allow at least 70% of light to be transmitted through them.
- For vehicles first used after the 1st April 1985 the windscreen must allow 75% of light to be transmitted whilst the windows on either side of the driver must allow a minimum of 70% of light to be transmitted through them.

NB: Where such material had been applied to the front or rear screen, provision must be made available to enable the licence disc to be applied directly to the screen.

Body Damage

Our inspector will assess vehicle damage at the inspection. A licence will be refused if there is evidence of significant body damage, which will include rusting, insecure or crudely repaired body panel/bumpers. In the event of refusal the inspector will explain fully their reasons why they consider the damage to warrant refusal.

Additional fittings

Any additional fixtures or fittings will be assessed to ensure compliance with road traffic legislation and PCO guidelines. The assessment will also ensure that the fitting does not pose a hazard to the safety of the driver, passenger or other road users.

If a cable or webbing winch is fitted to the vehicle, a Certificate of Inspection valid for no more than 12 months must have been issued by a reputable company.

Single Vehicle Approval (SVA)

Vehicles with up to 8 passenger seats imported into the United Kingdom (UK), are required to undergo a mandatory SVA inspection before they will be accepted for a London PHV licence. Vehicles that have been issued with a Ministers Approval Certificate (MAC), a photocopy of the certificate must be produced at the PHV licensing inspection, unless the details are recorded on the vehicle registration document/certificate. Vehicles with over 8 passenger seats are classed as minibuses and will not be licensed by this authority.

Number of passengers

The number of passenger doors, and seats fitted with seatbelts will determine the number of passengers the vehicle will be licensed to carry. The only exception to this requirement is when the Licensing Authority grants an exemption from the seatbelt regulation.

Stretched limousine vehicles will be licensed to carry up to a maximum of 8 passengers only.

Regulatory requirements

The advice above on how to pass first time relates to the following formal regulatory requirements:

- **Vehicle type**

It must be a light passenger vehicle as defined by section 85 of the Road Traffic Act 1988(1).

Vehicles must be M1 Type Approved (In most cases this can be found on the V5c) and the vehicle must have a minimum of 4 road wheels.

- **Vehicle to have right hand drive**

The steering wheel to be on the right hand of the vehicle.

- **Wheelchair lifting equipment**

Any equipment fitted to the vehicle for the purpose of lifting a wheelchair into the vehicle must have been installed and tested in accordance with the requirements of the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998(1). The regulations state that all lifting equipment must be thoroughly examined by a competent person: every 6 months, in accordance with LOLER (see above) examination scheme and immediately after exceptional

circumstances where the condition is liable to jeopardise the safety of the lifting equipment. Eg, an accident, major damage etc. (Please bring evidence of such a test with you to the inspection).

- **Luggage space**

The luggage space should be clear and uncluttered.

- **Construction and type approval requirements**

As a guide, most large volume production vehicles produced in the UK and EU states after 1987 will satisfy UK and/or European Whole Type Approval. Specialist vehicles or any vehicle that has been structurally modified or converted since its original manufacture will require separate SVA and/or DfT approval and such documentation should be brought to the inspection.

- **Compliance with manufacturers specification**

Vehicles must not have a modification to the braking system, steering, engine, transmission, fuel system, suspension or lighting system.

- **Modified or converted vehicles**

Where a vehicle has been converted or modified as to be capable of propulsion other than by petrol or diesel fuel, evidence must be produced at the inspection to show that the conversion has been carried out, and subsequently tested at the recommended frequency by an approved supplier in respect of that vehicle (ie as listed in the PowerShift or Clean Up Register maintained by the Energy Saving Trust; or EEA equivalent).

Any other modification to the interior or exterior of the vehicle (which was not part of the manufacturer's specification) could result in a vehicle not being licensed. In making such decisions, the vehicle inspector will be guided by the type of modification, whether it is permanent or temporary and, most importantly, whether the modification poses a risk to the safety of the passenger, the driver or other road users.

- **Additional equipment fitted in the vehicle**

Modifications to the interior of the vehicle; such as radio equipment, in car mobile phone and fittings, in car navigation or in car CCTV are likely to be approved provided the fitment is not considered to pose a risk to the safety of the passenger or the driver and is fitted safely and securely.

- **Doors and windows**

All doors and windows must be in full working order and operating mechanisms should be accessible by passengers.

If the vehicle is fitted with a single door for the passenger compartment, that door must be fitted to the left hand or near side of the vehicle.

The number of doors must be sufficient to allow safe access and egress for the number of passengers which the vehicle is licensed to carry.

- **External Signage or Advertising**

Regulations specifically exclude from licensing any vehicle which has external signage or advertising.

- **Exemptions**

Owners may apply for a particular vehicle to be exempt from some or all of the above licensing requirements. Such exemptions are likely to be granted only in exceptional circumstances and each case will be considered on its merits.

Classic or specialist vehicles are most likely to fall into this category.

Vehicle owners are advised to contact the PCO first before making a licence application if they are in any doubt that their vehicle does not meet any of the above criteria.

Exemption from displaying the licence disc

The Licensing Authority can, by notice, exempt a vehicle from displaying the licence disc(s) if it is considered inappropriate (having regard to the service for which the vehicle is being used). An exemption is likely to be given only in exceptional circumstances and will only be valid for one year.

Vehicle owners should not assume that a request will be granted and are advised to contact the PCO before making a license application.

Issue of Licences

A licence will be issued for a period of 12 months from the date of the inspection, unless there are particular reasons as to why it should be issued for a shorter period. Licences will be issued in the name of the Registered Keeper of the vehicle (ie the name of the person recorded on the V5c DVLA vehicle registration certificate).

Safety enhancement features

Any active or passive safety system designed to lesson the risk of injury or death in an accident, such as airbags, seatbelt tensioner etc, much be in good working order.

Inspection failure

In the event that a vehicle fails its licensing inspection, details of the reasons for the failure will be given in writing. The registered keeper (or their authorised agent) will be invited to make a further inspection appointment (which will be free of charge following the first failure) or, alternatively, informed of their right of appeal to a Magistrates Court and to whom an appeal may be submitted. Only those items which caused the vehicle to fail will be re-inspected at the re-test. Further advice can be sought by consulting with the SGS Team Leader.

Refunds

Vehicles which fail their licensing inspection, and the re-test which is free of charge, will have the “grant of licence” portion of the fee refunded. No refund will be given to that part of the fee relating to the licence application.

Congestion charge exemption

Once licensed, unless you state otherwise, the vehicle will be added to the congestion charging exempt vehicle register. Note: the licensed vehicle is only exempt from the charge when undertaking private hire bookings for a London licensed operator, and will be removed from the register on suspension, revocation, expiry or surrender of the licence. Vehicles which fail the licensing inspection are **not** exempt from the congestion charge.

Data Protection

Transport for London (TfL) and its agents may use the information we have been provided with for the purpose of assessing the application to hold a private hire vehicle licence and for the administration of the vehicle licensing service.

By law, if your application is successful, your vehicle registration number, licence number, licence status, issue date and expiry date will be made available on a public register. By proceeding with your application you are consenting to the processing of the data by TfL for this purpose. Your information may be passed to the law enforcement agencies if criminal activity is suspected or where we are otherwise required to do so by law.



SGS Call Centre 0845 378 2345



PHV Contract Management Team 020 7126 1806



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PCO (Vehicle Licensing) e-mail phvvehicles@pco.org.uk

Inspection Centres

[ENFIELD](#)

Unit 6
Watermill Business Centre
Edison Road
Enfield
EN3 7XF

[CROYDON](#)

Unit 4
Twin Bridges Ind Park
232 Selsdon Road
South Croydon
CR2 6PL

[HANWORTH](#)

Unit 9
Links Ind Estate
Popham Close
Hanworth
TW13 6JE

[WOOLWICH](#)

Unit 2
IO Centre
Cornwallis Road
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SE18 6SR

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