



## **Private hire vehicle licensing: Licensing of ambulance services**

PCO Notice 36/07 gave details of the amendment to the definition of a private hire vehicle (PHV) and outlined the arrangements for ensuring those services affected by the change are brought into the licensing regime.

Now that the definition of a PHV has been amended, some ambulance services fall within the meaning of a PHV. There is no specific exemption in PHV licensing legislation for an ambulance and the Government has no plans to introduce such an exemption.

The term 'ambulance' covers a wide range of vehicles but it is not the intention of Transport for London to license those vehicles that provide a genuine specialist or emergency service. In its guidance note dated 23 November 2007 on the impact of section 54 of the Road Safety Act 2006, the Department for Transport (DfT) provides guidance as to what services should legitimately be distinct from PHV licensing. The DfT guidance note can be found at [dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/taxis/rsa06privatehirevehicles](http://dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/taxis/rsa06privatehirevehicles)

In clarification of the DfT's guidance note, the definition of 'ambulance' that the PCO will apply, is:

A vehicle that falls within any of the following categories may be excluded from the London PHV licensing process.

1. A vehicle constructed or adapted for the purpose of the conveyance of recumbent persons in accordance with any relevant definition in Vehicle Construction and Use legislation.

Vehicles must have a rear compartment with a permanent means of conveying a person in a recumbent position, together with an attendant seat to accommodate the presence of a health professional. The words 'Ambulance' must be clearly signed on the front and sides of each vehicle. The vehicle should also be fitted with a blue warning beacon or a device which resembles a blue warning beacon (Road Vehicle Lighting Regulations 1989, section 16).

Ambulances in the NHS, private, local authority, military and voluntary sectors that comply with this definition will be classed as emergency vehicles.

2. Specialist vehicles which do not meet the criteria in 1 above (for example 'first response' vehicles) but which are defined as emergency vehicles under section 16 of the Road Vehicle Lighting Regulations 1989 due to the fact that they are fitted with a blue warning beacon or a device which resembles a blue warning beacon.
3. Vehicles which operate as part of a formal, contracted, patient transport service, usually non-emergency and solely for the purpose of the planned transport of patients who have been assessed by a health professional as having a medical need for specialised transport to or from medical appointments. These vehicles must be constructed or adapted and used for no other purpose than the carriage of sick, injured or disabled people to or from medical appointments.

There are three key requirements for this category:

That the vehicle:

- a. is specifically constructed or adapted in some way for the purpose of the carriage of sick, injured or disabled people;
- b. has been booked because the person to be carried has been assessed by a health professional as having a medical need for specialist transport to or from medical appointments; and
- c. is not used for 'social' hirings.

These vehicles will be readily identifiable as used for the carriage of such people by being marked 'Ambulance' on the front and sides of each vehicle. Vehicles may require the presence of a health professional.

Organisations that operate ambulance services and are affected by the change in the law are advised to obtain their own legal advice with regard to the need to be licensed.



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