



## **Taxi Vehicle Licensing**

### **Introduction**

SGS United Kingdom Ltd carry out the licensing inspections of taxis (Motor Hackney Carriages) in London on behalf of Transport for London (TfL). Licensing inspections are carried out at three SGS inspection centres in London and each inspection centre is equipped with state of the art computerised vehicle testing equipment, which delivers the licensing standards prescribed by the Conditions of Fitness 2007 and the London Cab Order 1934 as amended in 2007 provisions.

On completion of a licensing inspection, you will be issued a Motor Hackney Carriages (MHC) licence and plates or, in the event of failure, a computer generated Vehicle Inspection Report (VIR) will be produced, giving details of the reasons for failure.

Please make sure you read all of the information below to help you pass the taxi vehicle inspection first time, know what to do once your taxi is licensed and what to do should your taxi fail an inspection.

### **Registered keepers**

The registered keeper (owner) of a London taxi may apply to the Public Carriage Office (PCO) for a London taxi vehicle (Motor Hackney Carriage) licence. Registered keeper means the person or entity registered by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) as being legally responsible for the vehicle. Taxi licences are issued in the name of the registered keeper (licensee) however, the registered keeper may choose to nominate a person or an entity to act as an agent on their behalf when making an application or presenting the vehicle for inspection.

### **Making an application for a licence**

To make an application for a new taxi vehicle licence or to renew an existing licence, you must call the SGS booking line on 0845 378 2345.

When you call you'll need to have the vehicle registration certificate (V5c) available and a credit or debit card ready.

The call centre agent will process your application and allocate a licensing inspection appointment at the inspection centre nearest to the owner's address unless otherwise specified. The appointment can be rearranged providing more than 24 hours notice is given before the inspection date.

### **Fleet owners**

Fleet owners requiring block bookings should contact the SGS Contract Administrator on 020 8755 2368.

If your taxi is already licensed SGS will send you a letter reminding you that a renewal inspection is due. This appointment must take place within 30 days of expiry of the current licence.

### **Keeping your appointment**

You should aim to be at the inspection centre 10 minutes before your appointment. You may lose your application fee if you:

- are late and cannot be fitted in
- cancel the appointment without giving 24 hours notice before the date of the inspection (excluding weekends & bank holidays)
- fail to turn up for the inspection
- re-arrange the inspection appointment without giving 24 hours notice

### **Required documents**

When presenting a taxi for the licensing inspection, the person presenting the vehicle must bring with them the following original documents for inspection.

- vehicle Registration Certificate (V5c) or AFRL certificate\*
- EEC Certificate of Conformity for new motor cabs
- certificate of Insurance
- the existing motor cab Licence including plates (if applicable)
- emission equipment – fitment sign off declaration (if applicable)
- Vehicle Excise Licence (tax disc)
- certificate of Taximeter Installation issued within 30 days of licensing inspection
- confirmation of appointment/booking letter
- any relevant document relating to the motor cab, as appropriate including any modification certificate

\*AFRL is the new Vehicle Automotive First Registration & Licence (AFRL) scheme certificate issued by the selling dealership.

### **Inspection criteria**

The licensing inspection will comprise of a full mechanical inspection, and will include an inspection of:

- brake performance
- obligatory lamps
- exhaust emission assessment (a separate smoke certificate will no longer be required)
- driver compartment and controls
- passenger compartment
- steering components
- suspension system
- under bonnet inspection
- luggage compartment
- external body panels assessment
- under vehicle inspection

- road wheels
- boot area
- taxi meter

The inspection will apply MoT standards for assessing the mechanical components unless otherwise specified in which case, the manufacturers standards will apply.

### **Changes to the vehicle**

Any changes to the original construction of the taxi such as modification, adaptation, changes to fixtures or fittings must be approved by the PCO. All requests for approval must be sent to the PCO Senior Vehicle Policy Manager before any changes are made. Any changes made without to the motor cab without approval will result in the taxi vehicle licence being refused.

### **Taximeters**

All taxis presented for licensing are required to be fitted with a current taximeter installed by a PCO approved taximeter installer. The taximeter and the operating devices must be PCO sealed by the installer and certificated to confirm that the equipment is PCO compliant. The certificate issued must be produced at the licensing inspection. If the certificate is not presented the taxi vehicle licence application will be refused.

### **Advertisements**

Any vehicle with advertisements presented for inspection must display a PCO alpha numeric number. Any unapproved adverts fixed to the vehicle will mean a licence will not be issued.

### **Communication devices**

All radio equipment fitted to the vehicle must be fitted securely and safely and in accordance with the MPT 1362 Code of Practice (as amended) for the installation of radio and related ancillary equipment in land based vehicles and the PCO guidelines. Any two-way radio equipment must be of a type approved by the Office of Communications (Ofcom).

Before fitting any radio equipment, approval must be first obtained from PCO.

### **Taxi proprietorship**

Taxi owners that are not licensed taxi drivers or approved taxi proprietors must undergo an Enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check. The PCO will contact the new owner and invite them to complete the necessary CRB form and return it to the PCO. If you require further advice contact the PCO Taxi Contract Management Team.

### **Duration of licence**

A taxi vehicle licence will be issued for a maximum period of 12 months unless there are particular reasons as to why it should be issued for a shorter period.

## Emission standards

All taxis presented for licensing must meet the Euro 3 emission standards before a licence will be granted. Details of whether the vehicle is Euro 3 compliant can be obtained from the manufacturer or the selling dealership. Taxis not manufactured to Euro 3 standards can have a retro fit fuel abatement system installed by the manufacturer nominated fitting agent. For further information contact the PCO Taxi Contract Management Team.

## Fuel type conversion

Where a taxi has been converted or modified as to be capable of propulsion other than by diesel fuel, evidence must be produced at the inspection to show that the conversion has been carried out by an agent approved by the manufacturer. In the case of LPG conversions, the fitting agent must be approved by the LPG association.

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

## Refunds

If your taxi fails a licensing inspection and subsequently fails the one retest which is free of charge, then the "grant of licence" portion of the fee will be refunded. No refund of the "licence application" will be granted.

## Congestion Charge exemption

Once licensed the vehicle will qualify for exemption from the Congestion Charge from the date the licence was issued. Your taxi will continue to be exempt providing the licence remains valid. Vehicles which fail a licensing inspection are only exempt from the Congestion Charge on the day of the inspection.

## Issuing the licence

The taxi vehicle licence will be issued to the 'person' applying for the licence. This must be a **named** individual and will, ideally, be the same as the person who is recorded with the DVLA as the registered keeper.

Where the registered keeper is a company or business entity, the licence will be issued to a named person as the issuing of a taxi vehicle licence imposes certain licensing conditions, which are described below, on the licence. The named person will be the person held responsible for complying with the licensing conditions. The licensing conditions are 'prescribed conditions' and are defined in the Metropolitan Public Carriage Act 1869 and the 1934 London Cab Order as amended in 2007 provisions and any subsequent amendments.

## Conditions

Once licensed you must ensure that your taxi, including all fittings, advertisements etc are maintained to the approved standards and that the vehicle is always well maintained and kept clean. Please be aware that your vehicle may be liable to inspection at any time by the PCO and any defect could lead to a notice being served prohibiting the use of the vehicle until the defect has been rectified.

### **Production of documents**

The licensee must produce for inspection, on request, the **original** documentation requested by a police constable, an authorised officer or a Public Carriage Examiner at:

- the licensee's principle place of business
- the PCO
- any of the SGS inspection centres specified

The documentation must be produced within seven days of the request being made or as soon as possible thereafter.

### **Special inspections**

During the period of the licence the taxi may be required to undergo a 'special inspection'. A 'special inspection' may be required for a number of reasons either at the request of the vehicle owner or at the request of the PCO.

The reasons for these inspections include:

- the taxi is involved in a traffic accident
- following a compliance inspection (on-street stop note)
- following a passenger complaint
- a replacement licence or plate is required due to :
  - accident damage
  - VRM change
  - Epsom & Ewell dual licence application
  - Lost or stolen plate
  - Name or address change
  - modifications or approvals

Should any of the inspection types listed above be required you should contact the SGS Call Centre specifying the reason why the inspection is required.

### **Expired licence and plates**

It is the responsibility of the licensee to ensure that expired licence and plates are returned to the PCO or at any of the SGS inspection centres as instructed no later than **three days** after the expiration date of the licence/plates.

## **Lost or stolen taxi licences and plates**

If in the event that the taxi licence or plates are stolen you must:

- report the incident to the police
- obtain a crime reference number
- report the incident to the PCO Taxi Contract Management Team on **020 7126 638**

## **Change of ownership**

If the owner of the taxi changes then the licensee must complete the reverse of the taxi vehicle licence and return this to the PCO within 14 days from the date of transfer of the vehicle. If the new owner of the taxi requires the licence to also be transferred to them then the new owner must complete sections B and C on the licence before the licence is returned to PCO. We will then issue a replacement licence to the new owner.

## **Taximeters**

It is the responsibility of the licensee to ensure that the taximeter and associated operating devices, including the receipt printer, are not removed without the authority of the PCO. The taximeter and associated components **must** remain sealed during the life of the taxi vehicle licence. In the event of a fault occurring that causes the seal(s) to be broken/removed, a new seal(s) must be replaced by a PCO taximeter installation service centre within 24 hours of the fault occurring, or as soon as practicable thereafter, or unless otherwise directed by a PCO authorised officer.

## **Taxis used by drivers other than the licensee**

A licensed taxi can only be **used** as a licensed taxi by a licensed London taxi driver. If you rent or allow other licensed taxi drivers to use your licensed taxi then you must retain the 'copy' taxi driver's licence belonging to the licensed taxi driver and produce this for inspection when requested to do so by an authorised officer or a Public Carriage Examiner.

## **Replacement of licence plate**

If the taxi licence plate is damaged you must contact the SGS Admin Team on 0208 755 2368 for an appointment as soon as possible so that a replacement licence plate can be issued.

## **Change of address**

The licensee must notify the PCO of their new address within 14 days of their address changing and must complete the reverse side of the licence and return

it to the PCO Taxi Contract Management Team so that a replacement licence can be issued.

### **Licence plates and approved notices**

The licence plate and approved notices, including the fare chart, shall not be removed or concealed and the details placed upon them shall not be altered, obliterated or erased. Only notices approved by the PCO are permitted to be exhibited in or on a licensed taxi.

### **Carriage of passengers**

The licensee, or a taxi driver renting the taxi, must not exceed the total number of passengers the taxicab is licensed to carry. 1 child aged 10 or over, and/or 2 children aged under 10 will count as one passenger. An 'infant in arms' does not count as a passenger. When the taxi is being **used** as a taxi, no passengers must be carried in the front compartment.

### **Change of VRM**

If you change the vehicle registration number of the taxi you must contact the SGS Admin Team on 0208 755 2368 as soon as the new number has been assigned to the taxi so that a replacement taxi licence and licence plates can be issued. Your taxi will need to be presented at one of the SGS inspection centres (by appointment) and you will need to bring with you the following documents:

- the complete declaration on the reverse of the existing taxi licence
- appropriate evidence from the DVLA that confirms the transfer has been effected
- insurance certificate bearing the new registration number
- a new tax disc fixed to the taxi bearing the new registration number
- the registration plate showing the new number affixed to the taxi
- taximeter installation certificate amended to show the new number

### **Advertisements**

Advertisements and signage should not be fixed to a London licensed taxi without prior approval from the PCO. Any unapproved advertisement or signage fixed to a London licensed taxi may result in the taxi licence being revoked or suspended.

### **Renewal of the licence**

SGS will send vehicle owners a provisional licensing appointment approximately 6 weeks prior to the expiry of the existing licence and you must contact the SGS Call Centre to either confirm or rearrange the appointment. If

you do not receive notification from SGS, you must contact the SGS Call Centre otherwise the appointment will automatically be withdrawn.

If the provisional appointment is withdrawn you will have to make a new appointment but no guarantee can be given that an appointment will be available prior to the expiry date of the existing licence. In those cases where the vehicle is presented within 30 days of the expiry of the current licence and passes the inspections first time, the replacement licence will start from the date of expiry of the old licence.

If an appointment has been allocated and you fail to keep the inspection appointment the taxi will be removed from the Congestion Charge register when the licence expires and you will be responsible for the daily charge.

### **Luggage**

Luggage shall only be carried in the appointed luggage compartment.

### **Reporting an accident**

Licensees must notify the PCO Taxi Contract Management Team of any accident damage that materially affects the safety, comfort or appearance of their taxis. Following an accident the vehicle may need to be re-examined before it can be allowed to continue to be used for public hire. If you require further advice contact the PCO Taxi Contract Management Team.

## **What to do if your taxi fails an inspection**

### **Your options**

If your taxi fails an annual licensing inspection or special inspection you can:

- arrange a retest
- request an informal appeal (second opinion)
- request a personal hearing
- appeal to a Magistrates' Court

### **Failing a special inspection**

A special inspection may be required for any one of the following reasons:

- following a traffic accident
- following a compliance inspection (on-street stop note)
- following a passenger complaint
- requesting a replacement licence or plate because of:
  - accident damage
  - a VRM change
  - Epsom & Ewell dual licensing
  - lost or stolen plate

- change of name or address change

If your taxi fails a special inspection **it will not be fit for public use**. The reasons for the inspection and the failure will determine what further action will be taken. If the taxi fails a special inspection contact the PCO Taxi Contract Management Team.

### **Requesting an informal appeal**

Following the inspection failure you may request an informal appeal by asking the SGS Team Leader to reconsider the failure decision. If the SGS Team Leader believes the original decision should be reversed you will be issued with a taxi licence. If the SGS Team Leader upholds the original decision you **must** rectify the defects listed on the VIR before arranging a retest appointment.

### **Arranging a retest appointment**

In the event of a failure at an annual licensing inspection, you are entitled to one free retest. You must telephone the SGS Call Centre on **0845 378 2345** to book a retest appointment within 28 days from the date of the failed inspection. The 28 days can be extended if you need to get specific repairs carried out. If you have booked a retest appointment but it is no longer convenient for you, you are unable to attend the inspection or you wish to change the inspection centre then you must contact the call centre again to rearrange the retest appointment.

Should the taxi be presented for the retest with a serious defect which renders it unroadworthy or if there are other regulatory infringements the taxi will fail the retest even if the original defect had been rectified.

### **Arranging a retest inspection (Special Inspection)**

During the inspection the defects listed on the VIR will be examined but please note that the examination may extend beyond the items specified if safety related defects are clearly visible or if there are regulatory infringements identified such as expired road fund licence, expired insurance certificate etc.

In the event that the defects or the regulatory infringements cause the taxi to be deemed unfit for public hire you should contact the PCO Taxi Contract Management Team.

### **Personal hearing (formal appeal)**

Following an annual licensing inspection failure, you have the right to a 'personal hearing' if you are dissatisfied with the inspection decision. You must submit your request in writing to the PCO within 28 days of the failure notice (VIR) being issued. Your personal hearing will be heard by an independent

representative appointed by TfL. The representative will consider your case and submit their recommendation to the Licensing Authority.

If the Licensing Authority upholds your appeal, the original decision will be reversed and the taxi licence will be granted. Should your appeal be rejected, the original decision will remain. Upon receipt of the refusal notice you will still have the right to appeal to a Magistrates' Court.

### **Magistrates' Court**

You are entitled to appeal to a Magistrates' Court if the Licensing Authority refuses to issue a licence or suspend or revoke your licence. If you intend to appeal to the Magistrates' Court, you must apply in writing to City of London Magistrates' Court within 28 days of receipt of the failure notice (VIR) being issued. You should enclose the notice, any relevant correspondence, the postal dated envelope and address it to:

City of London Magistrates' Court  
1 Queen Victoria Street  
London  
EC4N 4XY

You can also contact City of London Magistrates' Court by calling 020 7332 1830 or 020 7332 1838.

Please be aware that your appeal may not be heard for several weeks and that the decision of the Court is final. If they uphold your appeal, the taxi licence will be granted and will take effect as instructed by the Court. If the Court rejects your appeal you will be required to make a new application if you still wish to have your taxi licensed.

### **Ad hoc compliance inspections**

Where a compliance inspection has been carried out and one or more defects are identified you will be issued with an inspection report (VIR). The defects listed on the VIR **must** be rectified before making a retest appointment. To make a retest appointment phone the SGS Call Centre on **0845 378 2345** and specify the type of inspection appointment.

If you fail to have any defects rectified or fail to present the taxi for inspection the licence may be suspended or revoked.

### **Abandoning a licence application**

If after 40 days you fail to either lodge an appeal or make a retest appointment, your application for a taxi licence will automatically be abandoned. Should this occur, and you wish to continue to have the taxi licensed, you will be required to contact the SGS call centre and make a further application and a further payment.

## **Refund**

If you fail an annual licensing inspection, or in the event of your application being abandoned without giving 24 hours notice, you will be entitled to a refund of the grant of licence fee portion only however, no part of the licence application fee will be refunded.

## **Congestion Charge exemption**

Your taxi will qualify for exemption from the Congestion Charge from the date the taxi licence is issued. Your taxi will continue to be exempt providing the licence remains valid. Should the taxi licence be refused then the vehicle will **not** be exempt from the Congestion Charge, other than on those occasions the vehicle is travelling to and from an inspection centre for a licensing inspection.