

Advice and Information

Vehicle Maintenance

Requirements (Northern Ireland)

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Introduction

Community Transport operators have a legal duty of care to ensure the vehicles they are operating are roadworthy and are operated in a safe and legal way.

Servicing and checking vehicles takes time and this must be allowed for in your vehicle schedules. The best place to record time set aside for maintenance is in your vehicle bookings diary. This will ensure that you never book the vehicle in for a service when someone is expecting to use it. Of course, it is not possible to plan for ALL vehicle downtime; vehicles have been known to break down without warning from time to time! However, if you allow 10 to 15 minutes at the beginning of each and every

job to check all the items detailed in 'Defect Reporting' and all the manufacturers recommended services and MOT tests are booked into the diary well in advance (by at least one month), you will avoid many of the potential problems. In addition, if your regular servicing and checking is done properly you will keep those unplanned crises to a minimum.

Best Practice

You will find more detailed advice and information on passenger vehicle maintenance in the "[Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness](#)" published by the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA). Whilst this guide is aimed at the commercial sector the guide sets out operators' responsibilities and best practice procedures that the Community Transport Association (CTA) strongly recommends the voluntary sector should also follow.

A good maintenance regime focuses on five key points:

- Daily checks
- Defect reporting
- Safety inspections
- Manufactures servicing
- MOT's

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Vehicle definition

This leaflet applies to minibuses operated under section 10B permits.

Minibus

A minibus is a vehicle with between nine and 16 passenger seats. Operators need to remember that when an accessible minibus has seats removed it is still classed as a minibus even when it may only have six fixed seats in it.

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Daily Checks

These are very important. There are a range of items that can be easily checked on a regular basis and this will ensure that potentially costly faults are picked up at an early stage, before serious damage occurs. A responsible person must undertake a daily walk around check before a vehicle is used.

Drivers must be aware that they are legally responsible for the vehicle whilst they are driving it and it is in their best interest to complete the vehicle check before they drive it rather than rely on another person. It is best practice that operators should provide training for their drivers to show them what checks are required and how items should be checked. These checks are best carried out using a form which itemises things that need to be checked with a 'tick box' that the person undertaking the check can tick to indicate that they have checked each item. The form should also have a space for a signature and the date to be used by the person carrying out the checks (remember, you will need two people to check the brake lights). This paperwork can then be kept as an accurate record of preventative maintenance carried out on the vehicle.

An example [Driver Daily Check Sheet](#) is appended to this leaflet.

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Defect Reporting

Even with regular servicing and a rigorous checking system, other faults or defects will still occur from time to time. In order to ensure that these are rectified as soon as possible a formal defect reporting system should be established. Every driver should have access to a vehicle defect report form (many organisations use the reverse side of the drivers' log sheet).

When a fault or defect is identified, the form should be filled in, signed and dated. It should then be returned to the Fleet Manager, co-ordinator or other responsible person for action. There should be a clear process by which drivers, who have identified a defect, know whether it makes the vehicle un-roadworthy, such as a non-working horn.

Defect report forms should be monitored on a regular basis (at least weekly), to ensure when faults are reported they have been actioned promptly.

Any report form where a defect has been noted must be kept, along with remedial action taken, the defect should be signed off by the person lifting the defect and kept for at least 15 months.

An example Vehicle Defect Form is appended to this leaflet.

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Manufacturer's Servicing

This must always be adhered to. The service documentation supplied with the vehicle will detail when (on a mileage and/or a time basis) the vehicle should be serviced. If the vehicle is still within the warranty period an approved agent must carry out such servicing, otherwise the warranty is likely to be invalidated. Please note these specified time/mileage intervals are over and above the Safety Inspections discussed later in this leaflet.

It is important that you keep all records and invoices relating to servicing and repairs of your vehicle and all MOT certificates. Apart from the legal obligations to maintain your vehicle in a roadworthy state (and keep records) these records are the only way you can prove the vehicle has been well looked after if and when you wish to sell it. The MOT certificates, for instance, are the only legal record of the mileage covered by the vehicle.

You can ensure that maintenance is properly scheduled and carried out to the vehicle manufacturer's recommendations by taking out a maintenance contract over a fixed period. This also gives you the added advantage of being able to plan maintenance requirements. If you are buying a new vehicle, you should also make enquiries about purchasing extended warranty. It is often possible to cover the vehicle for up to the first three years of its life. After this period you can, if you wish, also take out mechanical breakdown insurance.

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Safety Inspections

Whether your vehicle passes the annual (MOT) test without a problem or requires a lot of work to get it through, this only proves that it is roadworthy on one particular day of the year. You should have additional safety inspections carried out to at least Public Service Vehicle (PSV) standard (see DVA's "Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness").

CTA recommend that safety inspections should be carried out at intervals no greater than 10 weeks. If your vehicle covers more than 15,000 miles a year, these inspections should be carried out more frequently. Even though such checks are not mandatory for non-PSV operators, failure to undertake them could be used as evidence of negligence in the event of a liability claim. Remember operators have a legal duty of care to ensure the vehicles they operate are roadworthy.

Older vehicles

Statistics show that older vehicles have a greater risk of failing their MOT and therefore, it is recommended that vehicles aged 12 or more years should be being inspected every 6 weeks.

An example [Vehicle Safety Inspection Form](#) is appended to this leaflet.

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Brake Tests

It is a requirement of the DVA that all vehicles operated under section 10B permits must have a brake test each time it has a safety inspection.

"Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness" (Annex 5) gives a useful guide to the range of checks that should be carried out as part of a safety inspection. Safety inspections cover those items normally checked during the MOT, and should take about an hour to complete, any remedial work should be

carried out after the inspection. Inspections should be carried out by a qualified and experienced mechanic at a fully equipped garage. Records of safety inspections must be kept for 15 months.

Safety Inspections should be viewed as preventative maintenance as checks that are required look at all the safety components of the vehicle. Consider the cost of having to recover a broken-down vehicle and 16 passengers over the cost of 10 weekly inspections.

An example Safety Inspection Record Sheet is appended to this leaflet.

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MOT Checks

In addition to the routine servicing you will have to get regular annual MOT tests carried out. It is important to note that all minibuses require their first mot test when they are one year old, not when they are three years old, as is the case with cars.

Remember, also, that minibuses with up to 12 passenger seats (excluding the driver) require a Class IV MOT, the same as a car. Minibuses with more than 12 passenger seats (excluding the driver) require a Class V MOT. As the tests are different make sure you get the right one. Most local MOT inspection centres can carry out Class IV tests. However, only certain government designated testing stations can carry out Class V tests.

For more guidance, see the CTA advice leaflet: [Vehicle Maintenance - MOT](#).

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Breakdown Recovery Arrangements

Make sure you join a breakdown recovery organisation. Many roadside breakdowns do not require complicated repairs at a garage; breakdown organisations are frequently able to put the fault right at the roadside, allowing the journey to continue. If this is not possible and depending on the cover you

choose, at least you can be confident that the vehicle will be delivered to a garage of your choice as soon as possible. Check the following before signing up with a particular organisation:

- How many passengers can they guarantee to get home?
- Can they accommodate passengers with disabilities?
- Do they provide a replacement vehicle (of a similar passenger capacity) if required?
- Can they transport your vehicle if it cannot be repaired at the roadside?

Breakdown insurance is available from two major sources: from motoring and breakdown associations and services and as an inclusive part of your existing minibus policy.

Operators need to be aware that they will need specialist cover for vehicle with a Maximum Authorised Mass exceeding 3,500kgs. This will usually take the form of a one-off use which will need to be paid for straight after the service has been used.

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Passenger Lifts

Passenger lifts are required by law to be inspected least every six months and it is recommended that they are load-tested annually by a competent person. The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER) and the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) cover the use of all lifts.

Following an inspection, a report must be given to an appropriate person in your organisation to ensure that the relevant action can be taken to repair any faults or defects. These inspection reports must be kept for a minimum of two years.

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Other Safety Equipment

Vehicle operators should also make sure that ramps, seat belts, fire extinguishers and all other safety equipment is in good working order. In the event of damage or suspected failure, immediate steps

should be taken to have the kit checked by the supplier or their authorised agent. The CTA recommend that the Daily Checks form should include this equipment along with any other item, such as permits, that the operator expects the driver to check.

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CTA Performance Standards and Quality Mark

Both the Performance Standards and the Quality Mark sets out the minimum standard of operation that the CTA believes needs to be demonstrated in order for an organisation to be able to assert that they provide a quality service.

Standard 6 of the Standards and the Quality Mark focuses on ensuring that organisations have systems in place to ensure that all vehicles operated under their operator licence/permit are maintained in a safe and roadworthy state, adherence to the contents in the advice leaflet should result in a member being able to demonstrate that they can meet this section of the Standard and Quality Mark.

For more information, please visit our website.

Driver Daily Check Sheet

[Insert your organisation's name here]			
This form must be completed prior to driving and handed in to the office			
Date:			
Vehicle Registration Number:			
Odometer Reading:			
Item	✓	X	✓ X
Engine Oil Level			Brake lights
Coolant Level			Fog lights
Power Steering Oil			Indicators
Brake fluid level			Reverse lights
Clutch fluid level			Hazard lights
Windscreen wipers			Interior & Step lights
Windscreen washers			First aid kit (seal)
Windscreen clean/serviceable			Fire extinguisher(s)
Mirrors			Bodywork
Horn			Seat belts front
Side lights			Seat belts rear
Dipped beam			Tyres. Pressure and wear (Visual check only)
Full beam			
Tail and No plate lights			
Any other defects:			
Checked by: Name: (Print)			

Defects Noted:	YES/NO	If yes complete defect report form.
Signature:		
Date:		

CONDITION OF YOUR VEHICLE

As the driver you are at all times legally responsible for the condition of the vehicle that you are driving.

This responsibility cannot be passed on to the organisation that own or operate the vehicle.

The vehicle should not be used if a defect affects vehicle or passenger safety or those items that are a legal requirement. Brakes; Lights; Steering; Horn; Windscreen wipers & washers; Tyres; Mirrors; Windows; Fire Extinguisher; First Aid Kit.

Vehicle Defect Form

[Insert your organisation's name here]

NOTE: All damage and/or faults should be recorded on this form, whether or not they are "new"

This form must be handed in to the office

Date:		Odometer Reading:			
Registration No:		Driver:			
DEFECT AREA (tick appropriate boxes)					
Battery		Fuel/oil leaks		Seats/seatbelts	
Body (ext)		Windows		Steering/suspension	
Body (int)		Heating/vent		Passenger lift/ramp	
Brakes		Horn/alarms		Wheels/tyres	
Coolant		Lights/indicators		Wipers/washers	
Door		Engine/gearbox		Mirrors	
PLEASE GIVE BRIEF DETAILS OF FAULT AND/OR SYMPTOMS BELOW					
Defect Repaired/Rectified. Yes/No			Vehicle booked into garage. Yes/No		

Remarks	Remarks
Date:	Date fault repaired:
Signed:	Signed:
Appointment/position	Appointment/position

Vehicle Safety Inspection Form

Vehicle Make:		Vehicle Registration No:	
Date of Inspection:		Operator:	
Mileage		Job Number:	

No	Cab and Saloon Interior	IC
01	Driver's seat: condition & security	
02	Driver's seat belt: condition & security	
03	Passenger seats: condition & security	
04	Passenger seat belts: condition & security	
05	Mirrors	
06	Driver's vision: condition of windscreen	
07	Windscreen wipers and washers	
08	Speedometer/Tachograph	
09	Horn	
10	Reversing alarm	
11	Steering control: wheel & column	
12	Service brake control	
13	Parking brake: mechanism & control	
14	Anti-lock braking system	
15	Saloon lights	
16	Driving controls	
17	Interior of body	

No	Exterior Lamps	IC
18	Direction Indicators: operation & condition	
19	Hazard warning: operation & condition	
20	Front sidelights: operation & condition	
21	Headlamps: operation & condition	
22	Headlamp aim	
23	Rear lamps: operation & condition	
24	Rear fog lamps: operation & condition	
25	Rear number plate lamp	
26	Rear reflectors	
27	Stop lamps: operation & condition	

No	Exterior and Engine Compartment	IC
28	Driver's door	
29	Passenger doors	
30	Passenger steps	
31	Glazing	
32	Security & condition of body	
33	Road wheels and hubs	
34	Tyres: size & type	
35	Tyres: condition (record tread)	
36	Spare wheel & carrier	
37	Chassis: condition	
38	Fuel tank & system: security & condition	
39	Exhaust system: security & condition	
40	Exhaust emissions	
41	Steering system: play and condition	
42	Power steering	
43	Axles	
44	Suspension: general	
45	Wheel bearings & drive shafts	
46	Shock absorbers: security & condition	
47	Mechanical brake components	
48	Hydraulic, air & vacuum systems	
49	Additional braking devices	
50	Electrical equipment & wiring	
51	Transmission	
52	Engine mountings: security & condition	
53	Brake fluid reservoir: condition	
54	Coolant reservoir & hoses: condition	
55	Oil leaks	
56	Paintwork & vehicle markings	
57	Number plates: condition	

Tyre Tread Depth							
Front Axle		Middle Axle		Rear Axle - Outer		Rear Axle - Inner	
Off-side		Off-side		Off-side		Off-side	
Near-side		Near-side		Near-side		Near-side	

Breaking Performance	
Service brake performance	
Secondary brake performance	
Parking brake performance	

Comments of Faults Found	
Check No.	Fault Details
	Signature of Inspector
	Name of Inspector

Action taken on Faults Found	
Action taken on Fault	Rectified by

Declaration
I consider that the above defects have been rectified satisfactorily and that this vehicle will be roadworthy until its next scheduled safety inspection.
Signature of Supervisor

About the Community Transport Association

The Community Transport Association is a national charity that represents and supports providers of community transport: thousands of other local charities and community groups across the UK that all provide transport services that fulfil a social purpose and community benefit. We are for, and about, accessible and inclusive transport.

We help our members remain relevant and responsive to key areas of public policy and to make a big difference for the people and families in the communities in which they work. Our vision is of a world where people can shape and create their own accessible and inclusive transport solutions and our mission is to achieve this through championing accessible and inclusive transport, connecting people and ideas and by strengthening our members and raising standards.

Keep up to date with CTA via our website or by signing up to our monthly [News Brief](#).

About CTA's Advice Service

The CTA's Advice Service is available to CTA members, community and other voluntary groups, local authorities and other statutory bodies. It offers information and support on any aspect of non-profit transport operations. The CTA's Advice Service covers the whole of the UK and is supported by national governments. We will only ever explain the most accurate and commonly accepted interpretation of regulations and best practice. We do this by providing support and information on a wide range of community transport related topics such as permits and licensing regulations and by signposting to other agencies. The Advice Service does not exist to provide legal advice on any topics. If you are still unsure you will need to seek [legal advice](#).

For more information, contact
advice@ctauk.org | 0345 130 6195 | www.ctauk.org

This leaflet has been primarily produced for members of the CTA. If your organisation has benefited from using it but isn't a member please consider joining us, for more details please see: <https://ctauk.org/why-become-a-cta-member>.

Disclaimer:

The Community Transport Association has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, but it should be noted that this is only a guide, and should be treated as such.