

The EU Driver Training Directive

Who is affected by the rules?

All professional drivers, whether newly qualified or existing, of vehicles requiring driving licences in all categories of groups C and D (vans and trucks above 3.5t gvw, buses, coaches and minibuses) will be required by the legislation to hold not only a driving licence but also a Drivers CPC, which is renewable every five years (periodic training). Therefore employers will also be affected by the rules.

Exemptions are made for drivers of:

- vehicles with a maximum authorised speed not exceeding 45km/h
- vehicles used by, or under the control of, the armed forces, civil defence, the fire service and forces responsible for maintaining public order
- vehicles undergoing road tests for technical development, repair or maintenance purposes, or of new or rebuilt vehicles which have not yet been put into service
- vehicles used in states of emergency or assigned to rescue missions
- vehicles used in the course of driving lessons for any person wishing to obtain a licence or a CPC
- vehicles used for non-commercial carriage of passengers or goods, or for personal use
- vehicles carrying materials or equipment to be used by the driver in the course of his or her work, provided that driving the vehicle is not the driver's principal activity

What is driver CPC?

The driver CPC (certificate of professional competence) is a professional qualification to ensure professional drivers are familiar with best practices and the legislative requirements that affect them. Training is designed to confirm and expand on the existing knowledge and skills of each driver to ensure that they continue to be confident, safe and fuel-efficient drivers. This will also enable drivers to keep up to date with ever changing regulations and to benefit from state of the art training throughout their whole career.

What is periodic training?

The requirement is for a minimum of 35 hours' training during every five-year period. It must be done in blocks of at least seven hours at a time. However, there is a certain degree of flexibility in how these blocks are spread out over the five-year period. For instance, all 35 hours can be taken in the fifth year. There are no tests, but the training must be given at a DSA-approved training centre. A national database of centres will be made available by the DSA.

Why the change?

To quote directly from the directive:

“The obligation to hold an initial qualification and to undergo periodic training is intended to improve road safety and the safety of the driver, including operations carried out by the driver when the vehicle is stopped. Furthermore, the modern nature of the profession of drivers should arouse young people's interest in the profession, contributing to the recruitment of new drivers at a time of shortage”.

How will the legislation be implemented and enforced?

As the appropriate government agencies, the Driving Standards Agency (GB) and the Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency (NI), have set up an approvals body, the Joint Approvals Unit for Periodic Training, that will approve and quality assure training centres and courses for both PCV and LGV.

The two Sector Skills Councils, Skills for Logistics and GoSkills, will manage the Joint Approvals Unit for Periodic Training. The Joint Approvals Unit will ensure that a consistent approach to training centres and courses is maintained across the LGV and PCV industries. The Joint Approvals Unit for Periodic Training will be responsible for:

- Approving training centres
- Approving course content
- Issuing a unique number for each training centre and each course
- Managing the quality assurance process for training centres to ensure that standards and approval criteria are upheld

CPC enforcement will be the same as current driving licence rules with police and VOSA requiring drivers to provide evidence of CPC status (drivers with valid CPCs will be issued with driver qualification cards). It will be an offence to drive without a valid CPC, and there will be penalties for vehicle operators who fail to prevent vehicles being driven by someone without a valid CPC.

Further reading

To find out more about the periodic training requirements of the Driver CPC, visit www.dsa.gov.uk

What are the key dates?

Existing Drivers (PCV)

All professional PCV drivers who held a full, valid category D, D1, D+E or D1+E licence at 10 September 2008 need to complete the 35 hours of periodic training by 10 September 2013.

After this, they will need to undertake a further 35 hours of training in every subsequent five year period in order to retain their Driver CPC.

Existing Drivers (LGV)

All professional LGV drivers who held a full, valid category C, C1, C+E or C1+E licence at 10 September 2009 need to complete the 35 hours of periodic training by 10 September 2014.

After this, they will need to undertake a further 35 hours of training in every subsequent five year period in order to retain their Driver CPC.

New Drivers

New Drivers need to immediately begin their periodic training and will need to complete 35 hours of training within five years of attaining their initial Driver CPC.

After this, they will need to undertake a further 35 hours of training in every subsequent five year period in order to retain their Driver CPC.

Drivers who hold both a PCV and LGV licence

Drivers with both a PCV and LGV licence will have to complete only one course of 35 hours of Periodic Training every five years; they will not have to undertake 35 hours of training for each licence category.