

Digital Tachograph Regulations

It is now mandatory to fit digital tachographs to new goods vehicles first registered from 1 May 2006. This fact sheet will explain what that means to you as a vehicle operator and what you have to do.

What the digital tachograph regulations mean to you

The European Union has ruled that digital tachographs should be used to record driving time, rest and break periods, and periods of other work for drivers of most goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes maximum permitted weight. In a nutshell, all vehicles that required the fitment of an analogue tachograph now require the fitment of a digital tachograph, current exemptions apply. This data must be used by operators to monitor their drivers' compliance with EU drivers' hours rules.

The biggest difference between the current analogue tachograph and the digital tachograph is the use of a smart card instead of the record sheets (often called charts, discs, tachos) used in analogue tachographs

Vehicle operators and drivers have a number of responsibilities and training should be a high priority.

Why the change?

The European Union has instigated the change in order to improve the security of data when compared to the analogue system. It is thought that the current system is too vulnerable to interference by those wishing to alter data. The digital data provided by the new system will be easier for the enforcement authorities (VOSA) to analyse.

What you need to do

The FTA has devised a useful five-point action plan for operators:

- 1** apply for driver cards and company cards from DVLA (or the DVLNI in Northern Ireland)
- 2** acquire the special equipment needed to download data from the digital tachograph
- 3** train your drivers to use the digital tachographs
- 4** decide how the data from the digital tachographs will be analysed (there are a number of companies offering analysis services)
- 5** familiarise your staff with the additional procedures

Operators' responsibilities

Operators must:

- ensure that drivers are able to use both the analogue and digital tachographs
- ensure that vehicle units (VU) are calibrated before being used for the first time
- ensure that data can always be printed out from a VU; for instance, make sure that there are always spare print rolls on each vehicle

Drivers' responsibilities

Drivers must:

- ensure that they always have a current driver card with them when required to drive a vehicle with a digital tachograph
- never allow anyone else to use their card
- allow an employer to download data from the card
- understand UTC (Universal Time Coordinated)
- understand the pictograms on a digital tachograph display and print out

The Smart Cards

There are four cards (collectively known as Digital Tachograph Cards) that are used by the digital tachograph system:

- driver card - used by drivers
- company card - for use by the operator
- workshop card - available only to approved calibration centres
- control card - available only to VOSA and Police for carrying out enforcement

Retrofitting digital tachographs

There is no need to retrofit the digital tachographs to existing vehicles, and in most cases the analogue tachographs will suffice until the end of the vehicle's life.

However, certain vehicles registered after 1 January 1996 will need digital tachographs fitted if their original analogue systems have to be replaced for any reason.

Penalties

Failure to comply with the rule of fitting and use of digital tachographs will result in financial penalties of up to £2,500. The deliberate falsification of data may result in a penalty of up to £5,000 or up to two years in prison. The maximum fine for failing to comply with the demands of an enforcement official, including failing to produce required records, is £5,000.

Further reading

For product guides, price charts and other information about the changes, try visiting www.vosa.gov.uk www.fta.co.uk www.rha.co.uk and www.dvla.gov.uk