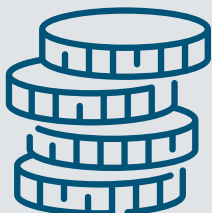


STANDARD RENEWAL FEES WAIVED FOR 2021

To assist the SPSV industry as it endeavours to withstand the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Minister Ryan announced a waiver of 'standard' vehicle licence renewal fees for 2021 in his budget speech in October. NTA commenced a public consultation straight away to enact the emergency regulation needed. Although only 5% of the industry responded to the consultation, the majority were in favour of the proposed draft measure and, following Board approval in December 2020, the [Small Public Service Vehicle \(Emergency Measure COVID-19\) \(Fees\) Regulations 2020](#) came into effect on 1st January 2021.

As a result of this measure, SPSV licence holders will not be required to pay 'standard' licence renewal fees for renewals falling in the 2021 calendar year. From 01 January 2022, all fees will return to normal.



LATE RENEWAL FEES WAIVED UNTIL JUNE 2021

In March 2020, at the start of the Coronavirus crisis, NTA immediately waived all late fees for SPSV licence renewals as this assistance to the industry was within our legal remit. We have now extended the temporary total waiver on late renewal fees to 12 June 2021.

After this date, licence holders will have to pay a late fee for a late renewal. This late fee will be the same as the normal standard renewal fee (€150/75/37.50) for the relevant licence category until 31 December 2021. From 01 January 2022, all fees will return to normal.

Please make your bookings early enough to ensure both an NCT and a Suitability Inspection are available.

All SPSV licences must be renewed within 12 months of their date of expiry. Legislation is very clear that there is no way to replace a licence after this period has ended.



VEHICLE AGE RULES INCREASED 2020 & 2021

To afford SPSV operators the opportunity to remain attached to the Industry during the COVID-19 pandemic, NTA enacted two emergency time-bound measures in 2020 following public consultations in April and October.

These measures facilitated the licencing of eligible SPSVs for one additional year in excess of the usual maximum permissible age limits of 10 years or 15 years depending on vehicle category.



The measures, the [Small Public Service Vehicle \(Emergency Measure COVID-19\) Regulations 2020](#) and the [Small Public Service Vehicle \(Emergency Measure COVID-19\) \(No. 2\) Regulations 2020](#), also received majority support during the public consultation stage, and following Board approval were enacted.

As a result of these measures, SPSVs which were due to reach their maximum permissible age of 10 years old or 15 years old between 13 March 2020 and 31 December 2021, will remain eligible to be licenced, all other obligations being met, for one additional year to 11 years old or 16 years old respectively.

MANDATORY FACE COVERINGS

It is mandatory for both passengers and SPSV operators to wear face coverings throughout all journeys. In December, the Minister for Health signed the [Health Act 1947 \(Section 31A - Temporary Restrictions\) \(COVID-19\) \(Face Coverings in Small Public Service Vehicles and Certain Premises\) Regulations 2020](#) to bring this measure into effect.

“a person shall not, without reasonable excuse, use or travel by small public service vehicle within a relevant geographical location without wearing a face covering”.

A “person” in these Regulations means both the driver and passengers (including when a passenger is entering the SPSV), apart from those who are under the age of 13 years, or have reasonable excuse for not wearing a face covering. In addition to the standard “reasonable excuse” exemptions which feature in all COVID health public transport regulations, exemptions are also provided specifically in relation to SPSV’s in the following circumstances:

- To the driver when they are alone in the vehicle; and
- Private use

The “relevant geographical location” in these Regulations currently means Ireland.

For the purposes of contact tracing, drivers are encouraged to collect contact details for rank and street pick-ups – these details are collected by dispatch companies/apps for pre-arranged fares already. Similarly, passengers should be encouraged to record driver details on the Driver Check app for example.



ELECTRIC SPSV GRANT SCHEME 2021

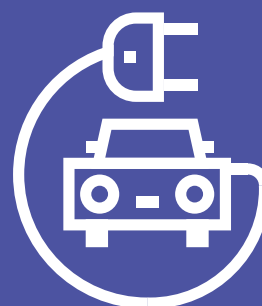
In his 2021 Budget, and in recognition of the important role played by SPSVs in making public transport more sustainable, Minister Ryan committed €15m to assisting the SPSV industry in transitioning to fully electric and zero-emission capable wheelchair accessible vehicles. The means by which this money is being made available to the industry is the Electric SPSV (eSPSV) Grant Scheme 2021. The scheme is funded by the Department of Transport and administered by NTA.

The amount of the eSPSV Grant made available by the Department in respect of a successful Application is dependent on a number of factors as outlined in the Information Guide and Terms & Conditions. SPSV licence holders can now avail of an enhanced level of grant funding where the current licensed vehicle is being scrapped and replaced by a battery electric vehicle (BEV) or a fuel cell electric vehicle (FCEV).

It can be combined with the WAV grant to fund eWAV purchase. The maximum level of enhanced grant funding is:

- €25,000 for WAVs; and
- €20,000 for non-WAVs

Further information about the eSPSV Grant Scheme 2021, including how to apply, can be found [here](#).



COVID-19 BUSINESS LOAN

Access to small loans through the Government's Microenterprise Loan Fund at 0% interest for 12 months.

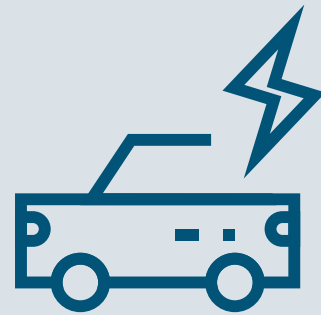
If your business has been impacted by COVID-19 resulting in a reduction of 15% or more in turnover or profit, and you are unable to secure finance from banks and commercial lending providers, the **Microfinance Ireland COVID-19 Business Loan** may be of assistance. Loans can be used for working capital or to implement changes required to manage COVID-19.

- Business Loans from €5,000 to €25,000
- First 6 months – 0% interest and zero repayments
- Government rebate for the interest paid in months 7-12 of your loan
- Interest rate after the first 6 months can be a reduced interest rate of 4.5% APR if submitted through the Local Enterprise Office Network (or other referral partners)
- Loan terms typically up to 3 years
- No fees or charges
- Fixed repayments with no penalty for early repayment

Further information can be found [here](#)

DEDICATED EV SPSV CHARGERS

The Department of Transport is currently undertaking an important *EV SPSV Charger Project* which will see the installation of SPSV-dedicated EV chargers at a number of key transport hubs. To date dedicated chargers have been installed at Dublin and Cork Airports and at train stations in Dublin (Heuston), Limerick (Colbert) and Cork (Kent). The Cork (22kW and 50kW) and Dublin Airport chargers (22kW and 2 x 150kW) are fully operational. The chargers at the train stations (2 x 50kW) are expected to be available to SPSV drivers by March. The Minister is firmly committed to expanding the roll out of dedicated SPSV recharging infrastructure in 2021 stating it is *“vital that drivers have greater and reliable access to recharging facilities as we look to green the SPSV fleet”*.



WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLE GRANT SCHEME 2021

A Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Grant Scheme (WAV21) will open on 01 March and run to 30 November 2021.

For petrol or diesel WAVs this grant is available to current SPSV driver or vehicle licence holders only.

For electric WAVs only, non-licence holders may also apply.

It can be combined with the eSPSV grant to fund eWAV purchase.

Grant levels:

- New (<3,000kms and <3 months old) €7,500
- Less than one year of age €7,000
- Less than two years of age €6,000

- Less than three years of age €5,000
- Less than four years of age €4,000
- Less than five years of age €3,000
- Less than six years of age €2,500

WAV21 Grant Scheme details will be downloadable from our website on 01 March.



PASSING ON A VEHICLE LICENCE

Section 15 of the Consolidated Taxi Regulation Acts enables a licence holder to nominate a representative who may apply to NTA to continue to operate the licence in the event of the licence holder's death. Whilst the nomination process is free of charge, less than one quarter of SPSV licence holders (22%) have nominated a successor to apply take over the vehicle licence in the event of their death.

NTA encourages all licence holders to complete the nomination process. Further information on the process can be found in [Guide G15 \(Section 15 Nomination and Assignment\)](#). To make a nomination please complete, including signature, [Form S15N \(Application to Nominate a Person in the event of death\)](#) and return to the NTA. The nomination will only be complete when you have received your confirmation of nomination letter from NTA. Please retain this valuable letter with your personal documents. This is the only way that a vehicle licence may be given to someone else – including your intentions in your will is not sufficient.



COVID INDUSTRY SURVEYS

A confidential telephone survey of SPSV drivers nationwide and an online survey of consumers were carried out in September/October 2020. An update of those surveys is ongoing to establish the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic covering areas such as demand, customer satisfaction, operational expenses and insurance, together with other topical items. The results of the last surveys are located at the links below.

- [NTA Taxi Driver Survey](#)
- [NTA Taxi Consumer Survey](#)

Repeat surveys, starting this month, will again be conducted by the independent research company Behaviour & Attitudes. All industry responses are anonymous. Participation is voluntary and operators may choose to opt out if they wish. However, participating fully will greatly assist NTA's regulatory and strategic planning for the industry and would be very much appreciated.



DRIVER LINK NOTIFICATIONS

NTA maintains an electronic database of links between each licenced SPSV and its current licensed driver. It is the driver's legal responsibility to ensure that this information is constantly up to date. The driver does this by notifying NTA whenever they start driving a different vehicle. This information feeds into the **Driver Check App** used by the public to ensure that the vehicle and driver they intend to use are licensed and registered with NTA. It is a criminal offence not to have a link notified to NTA when operating. This information is used by our compliance teams to detect and prosecute unlicensed drivers.

NTA provides a number of ways to keep this operational data up to date:

- [SPSV Online Services](#)
- SPSV Industry App – free downloaded from your App store
- SPSV Information Line - 0761 064 000
- SMS service – 51444

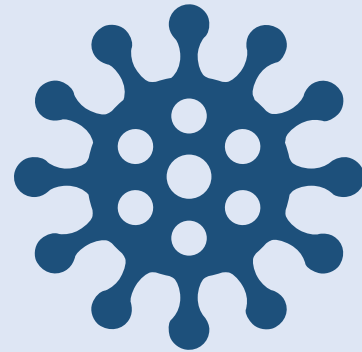
This reminder is particularly relevant to those operators who plan to return to work in the coming weeks and months when Government restrictions are expected to ease.

FÁILTE IRELAND'S COVID-19 INFECTION PREVENTION CONTROL

Fáilte Ireland's COVID-19 Infection Prevention Control training programme affords SPSV operators the means to develop their understanding of infection control practices and to apply this understanding to their work practices. Completion of the programme will assist operators in protecting their own health during the pandemic. It will also provide additional peace of mind to passengers and enhance public confidence in SPSV fleet safety.

This programme takes approximately 40 minutes and will guide you through the different safety measures and procedures which are required to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Details on how to register for Fáilte Ireland's training programme can be found [here](#). Drivers will receive a certificate on completion of the training programme which may be displayed in the vehicle for passenger comfort.



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic we have all faced unprecedented challenges in the past number of months. However, some of us have been impacted more than others. As we continue to live with the effects of the pandemic, it may be useful to know that there is help available. Below are some of the supports which are accessible free of charge to assist in protecting your mental health.

yourmentalhealth.ie HSE

[HSE – List of supports from various organisations](#)

[Samaritans – Online and Telephone Support](#)

[Crisis Support SMS Service](#)



REMINDER OF COVID-19 FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

NTA reminds self-employed SPSV licence holders who are receiving the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) and who are looking to restart their business that there are a range of financial supports available.

Recipients of the payment can earn up to €480 gross income per month (before tax and PRSI) minus expenses, while retaining their full PUP entitlement. Expenses must be directly related to the business in line with Revenue rules.

Further information regarding the PUP can be found [here](#).

Information on additional financial supports can be found by clicking on the below links:

[Enterprise Support Grant](#)

[COVID-19 Part-time Job Incentive Scheme for the Self-Employed](#)

[COVID-19 Business Loan Scheme](#)

[COVID-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme](#)

[COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit](#)