

Edition 8.0 – July 2025

THE OFFICIAL MANUAL FOR OPERATING IN THE SPSV INDUSTRY



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The National Transport Authority is committed to continually clarifying and improving its activities relating to the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry. NTA works continuously to improve practices and procedures relating to licensing and compliance.

Updates to this Official Manual for Operating in the SPSV Industry (called 'the Manual') will be published on NTA website www.nationaltransport.ie to reflect changes in any rules, regulations and industry standards.

To receive updates to your phone or by email call 0818 064 000 and have your details ready or register on www.nationaltransport.ie.

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WELCOME

Welcome to *The Official Manual for Operating in the SPSV Industry*. SPSV is short for 'small public service vehicle' – vehicles that are used to carry up to eight passengers, excluding the driver, for hire or payment. SPSVs play an important part in the delivery of public transport services. The term SPSV includes:

- › Taxis
- › Wheelchair accessible taxis
- › Hackneys
- › Wheelchair accessible hackneys
- › Local area hackneys and
- › Limousines

This publication is referred to as the 'Manual' throughout this handbook.

The purpose of the Manual is to help you develop the range of skills and knowledge required in your daily work as a driver, owner, or renter of an SPSV.

Whether you are new to industry or an experienced SPSV operator, this official handbook helps you stay up to date with industry guidelines, regulations, legal requirements and licensing developments.

The Manual has been created by the National Transport Authority (NTA) to give SPSV operators the information they need to apply for and maintain licences. New entrants to the industry can use the Manual to prepare for the SPSV Driver Entry Test, which they must pass to receive an SPSV driver licence. It will benefit people already working in the industry and those who are preparing to become an SPSV driver, to stay up to date and improve skills and knowledge.

It also provides information to help you operate successfully in the industry and covers important subjects like safety, customer service and running your own business.

For the most up-to-date information on changes in the industry, refer to NTA's industry website, www.nationaltransport.ie.



TERMINOLOGY

TERMS USED BY THE SPSV INDUSTRY

The following terms and language are used frequently in the Manual and the SPSV industry.

Adult Size	For seatbelt usage in a vehicle, 'adult size' refers to individuals over 150 centimetres and weighing 36 kilograms or more.
Calibration	Calibration ensures measurement accuracy by comparing an instrument's readings directly against known standards.
CCSN	This is your confidential customer service number included on all correspondence issued in relation to your SPSV licence.
Dispatch operator	An SPSV dispatch operator is an individual or organisation that provides a booking service/facility for SPSV journeys that are delivered by someone else. This service allows passengers to arrange an SPSV booking.
Driver display card	A driver display card is an identification card that SPSV drivers must display in their vehicles. This card is proof that the driver is licensed to provide SPSV services. This card provides essential information such as driver ID, photograph and the counties where they are licensed to operate.
Driver smart card	A driver smart card is a small identification card that shows essential information about the driver. This must always be carried by the driver while operating.
Fixed payment offence	For certain breaches of the SPSV regulations, known as fixed payment offences, NTA has the power to charge fines, known as fixed payment penalties. These are commonly referred to as 'on-the-spot fines'.

Global Positioning System (GPS)	This is a highly accurate satellite-based navigation system. It lets us know where we are and helps drivers quickly determine their precise location and navigate from one place to another.
Initial charge	When a journey begins, the initial (starting) fare charge is already on the taximeter. This covers the first 500 meters of a journey or a period of 85 seconds.
In-Vehicle Information Card	An In-Vehicle Information Card refers to the card that is displayed in an SPSV to provide fare information to passengers. This includes how to read a taximeter and information on extra charges that may be incurred.
Lease/Hire-purchase agreement	A lease/hire-purchase agreement is an arrangement where an individual or company leases or rents a vehicle for SPSV operations. The agreement can include an option to purchase the vehicle at the end of the lease period.
Maximum age	<p>The maximum age refers to a vehicle age limit that is set for an SPSV. This is applied to ensure safety and environmental standards are met.</p> <p>The maximum age of a vehicle can vary and depends on the different types of SPSV. The general aim is to phase out older vehicles or to apply additional inspections and requirements to ensure they remain safe and suitable for public service.</p>
Modified vehicle	A modified vehicle refers to any vehicle that has been changed or adapted for a specific use. For example, a vehicle that has been modified to be wheelchair accessible.

National Maximum Taxi Fare/Maximum Fares Order	This order states the maximum fares that may be charged by the driver of a taxi. It serves to standardise pricing, prevent overcharging and ensure fairness across SPSV transportation.
Plying for hire	A taxi is 'plying for hire' when it is available for hire in a public area, allowing a passenger to hail the taxi when in motion or enter a taxi at a taxi rank.
Private Limited Company (PLC)	A private limited company is a business owned by individuals or groups who hold shares in the company. It is legally separate from the owners, and they are not personally responsible for the company's debts. These companies have specific rules to follow.
Satellite Navigation System or Sat Nav	A sat nav is a system that uses satellites to provide geographical positioning information. For drivers it is an electronic system for route guidance and helps guide along the best route using audio and visual directions.
Sole trader	A sole trader is an individual who operates a business on their own without partners or a separate legal entity. The sole trader is personally responsible for all areas of the business, including profits, losses and liabilities.
SPSV	SPSV stands for Small Public Service Vehicle. It is a general term, covering the six categories of public service vehicle that have seating capacity for up to eight passengers, excluding the driver. The six categories are taxis, wheelchair accessible taxis, hackneys, wheelchair accessible hackneys, local area hackneys and limousines.
SPSV driver licence	This is the licence that allows a person to drive a licensed SPSV.

SPSV operator	An SPSV operator refers to any individual or company responsible for providing passenger transportation services using an SPSV. All SPSV operators must be compliant with all relevant NTA regulations and licensing requirements, terms and conditions.
SPSV (vehicle) licence	This is the licence that allows a vehicle to be operated as an SPSV in a specific SPSV category. Throughout this Manual, the SPSV (vehicle) licence is referred to as a vehicle licence.
Standing for hire	A taxi 'stands for hire' when it is stationary and available for hire in a public area.
Tariff A	Tariff A is the standard fare charge that applies after the initial charge. This covers the next 14.5 km or 42 minutes of a journey.
Tariff B	Tariff B is the standard fare charge that applies after Tariff A. This covers the distance after 14.5 km or 42 minutes of the journey.
Taximeter/Meter	The term 'taximeter' refers to the meter installed in a taxi that must be used for calculating and displaying the fare. A taximeter is commonly referred to as a 'meter'.
Two-way radio	A two-way radio is a communication device used in taxis. This device allows real-time, two-sided voice communication between the driver and operator. A two-way radio helps to make taxi services more efficient and coordinated.



CHAPTER 1: THE SPSV INDUSTRY

1

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter gives a general overview of the role of NTA in relation to the small public service vehicle sector.

- › About the National Transport Authority (NTA)
- › The importance of the SPSV industry
- › Licensing vehicles, drivers and dispatch operators
- › Rules and regulations for SPSVs and their drivers
- › Getting an SPSV on the road
- › National SPSV registers (licence database)

1.1 ABOUT THE NATIONAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY (NTA)

INTRODUCTION

The Manual contains the SPSV guidelines and regulations set out by the National Transport Authority (NTA). This Manual has been created to help you apply for and maintain SPSV licences.

NOTE

The SPSV licence referred to in this Manual, is the licence that allows a vehicle to be operated as an SPSV. It is different to the SPSV driver licence, which allows a person to drive an SPSV.



WHAT IS THE NTA?

Established by the Minister for Transport on 1 December 2009, the NTA is a statutory non-commercial body, operating under the control and guidance of the Department of Transport.

The NTA includes the previous regulatory organisation, the Commission for Taxi Regulation, which became part of NTA in 2011.

It is the licensing authority for Small Public Service Vehicles (SPSVs). Its functions include the development and maintenance of a regulatory framework for the control and operation of SPSVs and their drivers. It also includes associated services such as booking services (by app, telephone and walk-ins).

The NTA also has duties assigned under the Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016 and other relevant regulations.

THE NTA OBJECTIVES

Here are the main objectives of the NTA.

Promote and support the provision of affordable high-quality services delivered by SPSVs and their drivers.

Invest in activities that improve and support affordable high-quality SPSV services.



Help increase the connection and placement of taxi services into the public transport system.



Manage the development of a professional, safe, well-organised and customer-friendly service.

Commit to the protection and respect of both SPSV operators and their customers.

Encourage and support competition for SPSV services and standards including pricing, fares and customer satisfaction.



Help small public service vehicles become more available and affordable for people with disabilities, mobility or sensory challenges.



Improve the services offered by small public service vehicles, promote progress and innovation through support and investment.

Strengthen and encourage development of high-quality affordable services that meet customer needs, including passengers with mobility or sensory impairments.

Continue to develop and improve a licensing system that centres on the customer, along with regulations and standards for all SPSV licence holders and drivers.



NTA RESPONSIBILITIES AND LEGAL POWERS

REGULATION

The NTA can and is allowed to create regulations and set standards related to the licensing, control and operation of SPSV drivers, vehicles, renters, dispatch operators, bookings and other services.

LICENSING

Licences are given only to SPSV drivers, vehicle operators and dispatch operators or other booking services who meet the expected quality standards.

It is against the law to work in the SPSV industry without the correct licence or licences.

COMPLIANCE

The NTA tracks and checks the industry to make sure the law is followed across Ireland.

It investigates complaints from the public and, when it is necessary, NTA fines or prosecutes any breach of the law or SPSV legislation.

CUSTOMER AND INDUSTRY INFORMATION

The NTA provides a set of information services to the public and to the industry.

There is a complaints process and a commendation scheme for SPSV drivers who deliver high-quality service.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The NTA is responsible for making sure that SPSV operators meet high standards of knowledge and skill, so that customers can experience the best service possible.



POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The NTA works to connect SPSV services with the public transport system, ensuring that enough services are available nationally and that these services are suitable and can be used by people with disabilities.

We work closely with government departments, local councils, An Garda Síochána and other various groups to ensure that issues related to SPSV services are included in the development of national, regional and local policies.

We are continuously working toward rules and regulations that are correct and fair for customers, SPSV operators and SPSV licence holders.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SMALL PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLES

The Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles, also known as *the Taxi Advisory Committee*, is chosen by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

It gives correct guidance and advice on issues that are important to SPSVs and their companies.

The Advisory Committee speaks for many different partners and interested groups across the country including:

- › SPSV operators and drivers
- › Local authorities and councils
- › An Garda Síochána
- › Customers and consumers
- › People with disabilities
- › Businesses
- › Older people
- › Tourism sectors
- › Competition interests
- › Specialist experts



The NTA can submit key issues related to SPSVs to the Advisory Committee for advice and use the advice to help make decisions; however, the NTA can decide whether to take or act on the advice of the Advisory Committee.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on the policies, processes and the Advisory committee on SPSV go to the NTA website: www.nationaltransport.ie.

1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SPSV INDUSTRY

SPSV CATEGORIES

SPSVs play an important part in the national public transport system. They are the only type of public transport service that provides a personalised service, door-to-door, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

There are six categories of SPSVs.



INDUSTRY STANDARDS

The NTA's main goal is to ensure delivery of excellent service by SPSV operators to the travelling public through a professional, regulated SPSV service, run by professional drivers, vehicle owners, dispatch operators and booking services.

The NTA industry standards aim to:

- › Increase the quality of service provided by the SPSV industry.
- › Grow public confidence in the service.
- › Improve and provide business opportunities for operators who meet and exceed high standards.

1.3 LICENSING VEHICLES, DRIVERS AND DISPATCH OPERATORS

LICENSING AREAS

There are three main areas of licensing in the SPSV industry.

1. **Driver licences** are provided by An Garda Síochána with the support of NTA.
2. **Vehicle licences** are provided and managed by NTA.
3. **Dispatch operator licences** are provided and managed by NTA.

SPSV DRIVER LICENCES

STANDARD SPSV DRIVER LICENCES

A person with a standard SPSV driver licence given by An Garda Síochána is licensed to drive any category of SPSV.



LOCAL AREA HACKNEY DRIVER LICENCES

The holder of a local area hackney driver licence, which is a non-standard SPSV driver licence, is licensed to drive only local area hackneys.

When driving a taxi, the driver is only licensed to pick up passengers in the county or counties where they have been given a licence.

An SPSV driver is allowed to:

- › Drive their own licensed vehicle.
- › Drive a licensed vehicle owned by another person.
- › Be employed as a driver by another person.







The rules and requirements for driver licensing and the processes involved are in *Chapter 2, SPSV driver licensing*.

SPSV LICENCES

An SPSV driver may drive for hire or payment only in a licensed SPSV.

VEHICLE LICENCE CATEGORIES

Each SPSV category has its own vehicle licence.

 Taxi licence	 Wheelchair accessible taxi licence	 Limousine licence
 Hackney licence	 Wheelchair accessible hackney licence	 Local area hackney licence

A vehicle may only be licensed in one category at any time. The rules and requirements for vehicle licensing are described in *Chapter 3, Choosing a vehicle to use as an SPSV*.

Vehicle licensing processes are described in *Chapter 4, Vehicle licensing*.

DISPATCH OPERATOR LICENCES



An SPSV dispatch operator is an individual or organisation that provides a booking service for SPSVs.

The NTA believes that dispatch operators are very important in providing first-class service to the travelling public. Specifically, in improving the delivery of door-to-door services to people with disabilities.

Dispatch operators take and arrange passenger bookings for SPSVs or can be contacted directly by passengers who want to hire an SPSV themselves.

The NTA gives dispatch operator licences to individuals or companies that meet a specific set of rules and standards. The requirements for licensing and the processes involved are described in *Appendix C, Dispatch operator licensing*.

1.4 RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR SPSVS AND THEIR DRIVERS



Under the Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016, to reach and continue to build a high-quality SPSV service, NTA is authorised to create rules and make sure they are followed related to the licensing, control and operation of:



SPSV drivers



SPSVs



SPSV dispatch operators

People working in the SPSV industry must also comply with a wider range of regulations that apply to them as road users and as business service providers. These regulations are enforced by different types of government and legal organisations.

NTA's dedicated compliance team works together with An Garda Síochána to monitor and enforce SPSV regulations. This can be done by each organisation independently or through joint operations.

GOVERNING BODIES

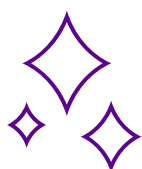
NTA works closely with various governing bodies and, when necessary, shares information with them.

We want to make sure that all SPSV operators work to the same high standards, providing high-quality services to the public.

The list below is an example of some of the advising bodies.

- › An Garda Síochána
- › The Road Safety Authority (RSA)
- › Local authorities

- › National Standards Authority of Ireland Legal Metrology Service
- › The Health Service Executive
- › The Revenue Commissioners
- › The Department of Social Protection
- › The Department of Transport
- › The Health & Safety Authority
- › The Equality Authority
- › The Office of the Ombudsman
- › The Competition Authority
- › The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner



THE BENEFITS OF REGULATION

The NTA is responsible for setting standards that must be met by all operators in the SPSV industry. We are committed to keeping all stakeholders involved in the SPSV industry up to date and informed of its work and research through its website, www.nationaltransport.ie.

Regulation benefits both SPSV operators and their customers.

<p>EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>Regulation ensures that equal opportunity for everyone in the industry, so legally approved operators do not have to compete for business with people who have not met the relevant standards.</p>	<p>HIGH-QUALITY SERVICE</p> <p>Customers can expect high standards of vehicle comfort and safety and a high quality of customer service.</p>	<p>POSITIVE REPUTATION</p> <p>Regulation and high-quality bring positive attention to the SPSV industry, protect standards and present a professional image to the travelling public.</p>	<p>PROFIT GROWTH</p> <p>Customers have greater confidence in the industry and choose to use its services because there is a set of clear standards and rules that are checked and followed.</p>
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1.5 GETTING AN SPSV ON THE ROAD

You must follow the SPSV regulations, even if you drive your own vehicle, drive a vehicle owned by someone else, or work as an employee for another person or group.

SPSV REGULATIONS

To drive an SPSV, you must have:

- ✓ A valid SPSV driver licence in addition to your regular driving licence.
- ✓ A licensed SPSV vehicle. The vehicle must hold a valid and up-to-date licence to operate in one of the six categories of SPSV.
- ✓ A valid insurance certificate. The vehicle must be insured to operate as an SPSV.
- ✓ A valid roadworthiness certificate. The vehicle must have a current (National Car Test) NCT certificate.
- ✓ Tax clearance. You must be up to date in your tax affairs and maintain your tax clearance status throughout the period of your licence. Your tax clearance status will be checked online by NTA.
- ✓ A driver to vehicle link. At all times, you need to provide NTA with details of the SPSV vehicle you are driving. This information is available to the public. NTA keeps a record of every licensed SPSV and the driver who currently owns or is connected to it. This is described further in *Chapter 5, Working as an SPSV operator*.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact NTA's SPSV Information Line on 0818 064 000 or visit the website at www.nationaltransport.ie.

THE SPSV SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Every successful business invests in ongoing training and skills development. The SPSV business operates in a constantly changing and challenging world. The industry relies heavily on personal skills, and it will only succeed if SPSV operators also invest in their own learning and development.

The NTA's Skills Development Programme for SPSV operators is designed to help you develop the set of everyday skills you need to work in the SPSV industry.

We are committed to developing and improving the Skills Development Programme in line with international and industry standards.



SPSV DRIVER ENTRY TEST

If you are a new SPSV driver licence applicant, you must pass the SPSV Driver Entry Test, which has two modules.

- › Industry Knowledge Module
- › Area Knowledge Module (county-specific)

SAFEGUARDING AND DISABILITY AWARENESS



Once you pass the SPSV Driver Entry Test, you must then complete the free, online eLearning modules.

- › Safeguarding module
- › Disability Awareness module

AREA KNOWLEDGE MODULE

If you already hold an SPSV driver licence and you wish to stand or ply for hire in a county other than the one in which you were originally licensed, you will be required to pass the area knowledge module for the additional area. This is called an Area Knowledge Test.

You may also be asked to sit and pass the Area Knowledge Test before your licence is renewed, if during the previous three years, NTA receives three or more complaints relating to your area knowledge.

To understand the qualification process in detail, go to *Chapter 11, Preparing for your test*.

1.6 NATIONAL SPSV REGISTERS (LICENCE DATABASE)



NATIONAL REGISTER

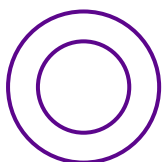
Under Section 18 of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 and 2016, NTA must keep an official list of licences, known as the national register.

NTA allows other agencies to access this register, where permitted, to ensure law enforcement and compliance. This register is not accessible to the wider public. The national register includes details on licence holders, vehicles and SPSV driver licences.

LICENCE HOLDER INFORMATION

For licence holders, the register includes the following additional details.

- › The name and address of the licence holder.
- › The date on which the licence was given.
- › Details of any licence suspension, including the length of time of the suspension, the reason for the suspension and details about all the removals of such suspensions.



VEHICLE LICENCE INFORMATION

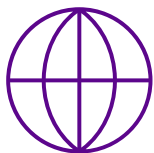
For vehicle licences, the register includes the following additional details.

- › The vehicle licence number.
- › The registration number of the licensed vehicle.
- › The SPSV category the licence is for/applies to.
- › Details of any changes of the vehicle connected with the licence.

SPSV DRIVER LICENCE INFORMATION

For SPSV driver licences, the register includes the following additional details.

- › The SPSV driver licence number.
- › The SPSV driver licence photograph.
- › The county or counties where the SPSV driver licence has been given.



PUBLIC (ONLINE) REGISTER

By law, a small section of the licence record information above is available to the general public on NTA's consumer-facing website, www.transportforireland.ie.

NTA does not share or publish the following details on their website:

- › Address details of licence holders.
- › Details of suspensions or cancellations of licences.
- › Certain personal details about the licence holder.

However, in line with Section 18 of the Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016, it must give details of any licence holder if there is a written request for a certificate of information. There is a fee for this type of request.

The information published on NTA's consumer-facing website, www.transportforireland.ie includes the following.

SPSV driver licence information:

- › SPSV driver licence number
- › The holder's name
- › Licensed areas of operation
- › Licence expiry date

Vehicle licence information:

- › Vehicle licence number
- › Licence type
- › Vehicle registration number
- › Licence expiry date

Dispatch operator information:

- › Dispatch operator licence number
- › Company name
- › Contact name
- › Licence status
- › Licence expiry date

FURTHER INFORMATION

You can contact NTA in a few ways:

- › Phone: 0818 064 000 (SPSV Information Line).
- › Email: taxis@nationaltransport.ie.
- › Complete the Contact Us form on NTA's industry website: <https://contactus.nationaltransport.ie/>.



CHAPTER 2: SPSV DRIVER LICENSING

2

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter explains how to get an SPSV licence.

- › Introduction to the SPSV driver licence
- › Requirements to get an SPSV driver licence
- › SPSV driver licence application process
- › Renewing your SPSV driver licence
- › Your rights and responsibilities

2.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SPSV DRIVER LICENCE

RESPONSIBLE ORGANISATIONS

There are two organisations involved in the SPSV driver licensing process. An Garda Síochána and the NTA (National Transport Authority).

AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA RESPONSIBILITIES



An Garda Síochána, the national police service of Ireland, is the SPSV driver licensing authority.

It is responsible for:

Supplying SPSV driver licence application forms (PSV 15/18) at Garda stations.

Managing applications that are received.

Checking applicants to decide their suitability, including a background check (vetting).

Where appropriate, granting and renewing SPSV driver licences (PSV 17).

NTA RESPONSIBILITIES

Administering the SPSV Driver Entry Test.

Administering the Safeguarding and Disability Awareness professional development course.

Collecting SPSV driver licence fees.

Issuing the SPSV driver identification (ID) cards once the SPSV driver's licence has been granted by An Garda Síochána. An SPSV driver must always have this card with them when operating.

Managing the SPSV driver licence register (records) as described in *Chapter 1, The SPSV industry*.

2.2 REQUIREMENTS TO GET AN SPSV DRIVER LICENCE

SPSV driver licences are given only to people who meet the following requirements.

- › An Garda Síochána have confirmed them to be a suitable person to hold an SPSV driver licence.
 - › They have an up-to-date and official driving licence for Class B or higher.
 - › They have possessed a driving licence continuously without endorsement in the time prior to their application.
 - › They are fully up to date with their taxes. An applicant's tax clearance status will be checked and confirmed online by NTA.
 - › They have passed both parts of the SPSV Driver Entry Test and have received the SPSV Skills Development Certificate. See *Chapter 11, Preparing for your test.*
- Applicants for local area hackney driver licences do not have to pass the SPSV Driver Entry Test.**
- › They have successfully completed the free, online professional development course for Safeguarding and Disability Awareness.

NOTE

Proof of tax clearance must be given to An Garda Síochána with the licence application, and the name with Revenue must match the one on the licence. Driver licence holders must continue their tax clearance status throughout the licence period.

2.3 SPSV DRIVER LICENCE APPLICATION PROCESS

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

1

STEP 1: PASS THE TESTS AND PAY THE FEE

To apply for an SPSV driver licence, you must:

- › Complete and pass both parts of the SPSV Driver Entry Test and get your SPSV Skills Development Certificate.
- › Complete the free, online, professional development course for Safeguarding and Disability Awareness.
- › Pay the correct licence fee to NTA using a credit or debit card. This is €250 for a new SPSV Driver's Licence. You can do this by calling the Information Line – 0818 064 000.

NTA will provide you with a paper copy of the receipt for this fee, which you will need for your application to An Garda Síochána.

The fee can only be used for one licence application.

NOTE

There are no refunds for the licence fee, so you should only pay it when you have passed the SPSV Driver Entry Test and if you know you can also meet all the other conditions for licensing.

2

STEP 2: APPLY FOR THE LICENCE

Gather the required documentation and apply for your licence.

DRIVER LICENCE APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Your SPSV Skills Development Certificate and the receipt for your licence fee.
- ☐ Proof of your tax clearance status.
- ☐ Your current driving licence and your driver licence history. This is available from the National Driver Licence Service (NDLS).
- ☐ Three official photographs of you, each measuring approximately 10 cm by 7 cm. These should meet passport standards.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ A signed statement agreeing that you will not drive an SPSV for more than 11 hours on any three days one after the other.
- ☐ Details of any other work you have, including the name and address of your employer (if relevant).
If your other job involves driving, provide proof that you have told that employer of your plans to apply for an SPSV driver's licence.
- ☐ A statement that your health does not change your ability to drive an SPSV and that you are not taking medication that could negatively impact your ability to drive safely.
- ☐ A statement that you have not been found guilty of any of the crimes that are explained in section 30(3) or the Schedule to the Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016.
- ☐ Any additional documents requested by An Garda Síochána.

1. When you have everything on the checklist, go to your local Garda station and complete the PSV 15 application form.
2. Submit the completed application form with all the items on the checklist to the Garda station.

If you live in Dublin, you will submit your application to the Carriage Office.

The application process can take up to 12 weeks to complete and includes a review to check that you are a suitable person to hold an SPSV driver licence (background check).

If you have any questions about your application, contact An Garda Síochána.

TIP

Local area hackney driver licence applications have different requirements. See *Appendix B, Local area hackneys*.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

LOCAL AREA HACKNEY DRIVER LICENCES

A local area hackney driver licence is different from the SPSV driver licence in some important ways:

- › The licence holder is only allowed to drive local area hackneys.
- › The licence specifies a restricted area where the holder can pick up passengers. This area is usually within a radius of 5 to 7 km of an approved local area.
- › A person applying for a local area hackney driver licence must already have a vehicle licence for a local area hackney.



MANDATORY DISQUALIFICATION

If you have been found guilty and convicted of certain crimes, in Ireland or elsewhere, listed in the Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 and 2016, you cannot hold an SPSV driver licence.

If you already have an SPSV driver licence, it will be taken away and you cannot get a new licence or renew your current one while you are disqualified.

DISQUALIFICATION PERIODS

			
<p>Some crimes listed like murder, rape and some sexual offences can result in a lifetime disqualification (Part 1 of the Schedule).</p>	<p>Other crimes have a time limit, such as a 12-month disqualification if you have a suspended sentence.</p>	<p>You are disqualified for up to five years after being released from prison.</p>	<p>If you are disqualified from driving for any of the following Road Traffic Act crimes or their international equivalents, you will also be disqualified from driving an SPSV for the same length of time, plus an additional three to five years.</p>

Offences related to Road Traffic Act crimes include:

- › Careless or dangerous driving.
- › Driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or supervising a vehicle while you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- › Failing to provide a specimen, for example, a blood or urine sample.

If you have been automatically disqualified, you can ask the appropriate court for permission to apply for an SPSV driver licence or to get your current licence back. If you want to appeal or question a mandatory disqualification, you must tell both An Garda Síochána and NTA.

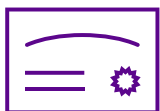
If you think any of this may apply to you, it is a good idea to read the relevant laws and speak to a lawyer.

NOTE

You must tell An Garda Síochána immediately of any relevant conviction or any crime related to your licence.

LICENCES AND ID CARDS

PAPER LICENCE AND IDS



Once your SPSV driver licence application is approved, An Garda Síochána will supply you with your SPSV driver licence and also inform the NTA.

Your paper licence (PSV 17) is issued directly to you from the An Garda Síochána PSV Office. Next, NTA will send you two types of ID.

A large **driver display card** for the dashboard of any SPSV you drive.

A small **smart card**, which you must always keep with you while you are driving an SPSV.

Both cards have your photograph, name, driver's licence number and the expiry date of your licence. Your driver display card will also have the area where you are allowed to stand or ply for hire. These cards confirm to customers that you are certified by NTA and have the relevant industry knowledge.

NOTE

Keep the cards safe. If you lose either of these identification cards, you must report the loss to the An Garda Síochána PSV Office immediately.

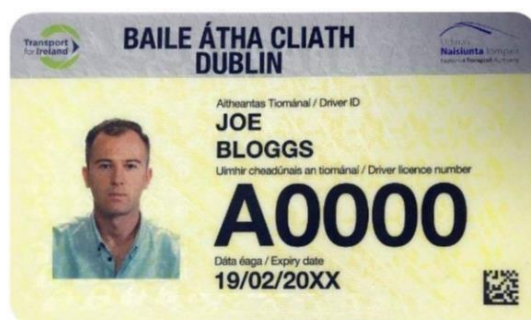
NOTE

A driver licence is given to a specified individual and cannot be used by anyone else.

Driver display cards

Your driver display card must be clearly shown on the dashboard whenever you are working as an SPSV driver.

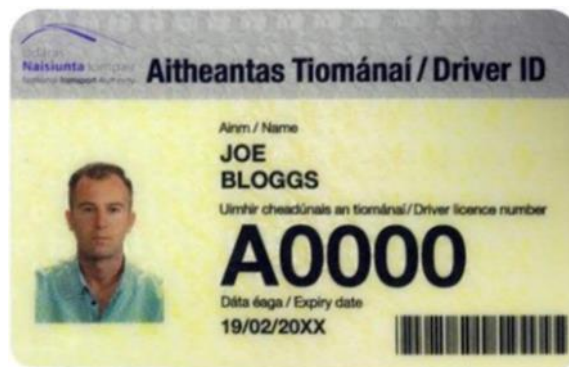
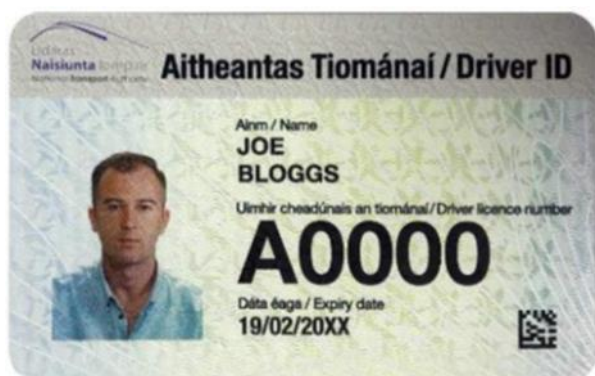
- › The card shows where you are allowed to pick up passengers without a booking.
- › For taxis and wheelchair accessible taxis, the card lists the county where you are licensed to work.
- › For local area hackney drivers, it shows the specific area where you can accept passengers.



If you want to pick up passengers without a booking in more than one county, you must pass the Area Knowledge Test for each extra county. You will then get a driver display card for each county you qualify in.

Smart cards

You must always carry your smart card with you when you are operating as an SPSV driver.



Area stickers

SPSV regulations state that if you drive a taxi or wheelchair accessible taxi, you must display an area sticker on your roof sign.

Area stickers are silver, and they have a one or two-letter code for the county where you are licensed to work. If you are licensed in more than one county, you can use more than one sticker.

It is your responsibility to make sure the correct sticker is shown on the operational roof sign while you are working.

NOTE

Drivers who do not display the correct sticker when working may get a fixed payment penalty.

SPSV driver licence

If you are granted an SPSV driver licence, you can drive any category of SPSV (taxi, wheelchair-accessible taxi, hackney, wheelchair-accessible hackney, local area hackney, or limousine).

- › Your vehicle must be licensed as an SPSV.
- › You can accept a pre-booked journey for any area.

TIP

When driving a taxi or a wheelchair-accessible taxi, you can only stand or ply for hire in the county or counties where you are licensed; however, you can drive passengers to places outside the county you are licensed for, and you can accept pre-booked trips from any county.

Local area hackney licence

If you are granted a local area hackney driver licence, you can only drive a local area hackney and you can only accept passengers in the local area where your licence is valid.

LICENCE EXPIRY

SPSV DRIVER LICENCE

A regular SPSV driver licence can be valid for up to five years.

The renewal process is described in the next section *2.4 Renewing your SPSV Driver Licence*.

LOCAL AREA HACKNEY DRIVER LICENCE

A local area hackney driver licence can be valid for three years and cannot be renewed, but you can apply for a new one when it expires.

2.4 RENEWING YOUR SPSV DRIVER LICENCE



RENEWAL PROCESS AND FEES

The requirements for renewing your licence are similar to those for a new licence application, as described in section 2.3 *SPSV Driver licence application process*, except you are not required to pass the SPSV Driver Entry Test or complete the Safeguarding and Disability Awareness Training online course. It is your responsibility to know when your SPSV driver's licence expires and to renew your licence on time. Your new licence starts after your current one ends.

EARLY RENEWAL

You can apply to renew your licence early, up to three months before it expires. It is better to renew early.

NTA sends out reminder notifications advising drivers to renew their licence early. This helps to ensure that you receive your updated driver display card and smart card on time.

LATE RENEWAL

Your licence can be renewed for a period of 12 months from the expiry date for a higher payment or late renewal fee. SPSV driver licences expired for more than 12 months cannot be renewed or reactivated.

NOTE

You cannot continue working if your licence is expired and you have not renewed it on time. You could be fined up to €5,000 for driving without a valid SPSV licence.

TIP

Remember, licence application fees are non-refundable. Make sure to meet all the rules and licensing requirements set out by An Garda Síochána before paying.

SPSV DRIVER LICENCE RENEWAL FEES	
Renewal submitted before licence expires.	€250
Renewal submitted up to 30 days after expiry.	€300
Renewal submitted more than 30 days but within 12 months after expiry.	€400

The requirements for renewing your driver licence are similar to those laid out in Step 2 of *Section 2.3, SPSV driver licence application process*.

Use the checklist and steps below to renew your driver licence and refer to Section 2.3 of this manual for any additional requirements.

DRIVER LICENCE RENEWAL APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Proof of your tax clearance status.
- ☐ Your current driving licence and your driver licence history. This is available from the National Driver Licence Service (NDLS).
- ☐ Three official photographs of you, each measuring approximately 10 cm by 7 cm. These should meet passport standards.
- ☐ Your SPSV driving licence.

1. Call 0818 064 000 to pay the required non-refundable licence fee by card. The NTA will provide you with a receipt. Keep the receipt for your application.
2. Collect and complete a PSV 18 renewal form at your local Garda station.
3. Submit your application form with all the required items on the checklist to the Garda station.
4. The Gardaí will check your application. If approved, they will give you an SPSV licence (PSV 17). An Garda Síochána can provide an SPSV Driver Licence Validity Period for up to five years.

5. NTA will create and send your new driver display card and smart card.
6. NTA will update the SPSV Public Register with your name and details.

TIP

If you live in Dublin, submit your renewal application to the Carriage Office.

LICENCE STATES

Your licence can be in one of three states.

ACTIVE

The SPSV driver is licensed to drive and can operate legally if all regulations are being met.

INACTIVE

The licence is expired, and the driver is not allowed to operate. The licence can be renewed within 12 months of the expiry date.

TIMED OUT

The licence is expired for over 12 months and cannot be replaced. A new licence including a SPSV Driver Entry Test must be applied for.

2.5 YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

SPSV DRIVER RIGHTS

As a licensed SPSV driver, it is important that you understand your rights.



FARES

You have the right:

- › To be paid in full for each journey you agreed in advance or calculated on the taximeter, whichever is less, for each hire.
- › To end the journey or the hire of your vehicle if the passenger fails or refuses to pay that fare.

REFUSAL OF SERVICE

You may reasonably refuse service to carry passengers who:

- › Smoke or consume tobacco, eat food or drink in your vehicle.
- › Act in an aggressive, intoxicated, drunk or disorderly manner.
- › Are likely to dirty or damage the vehicle.
- › Request journeys of more than 30 km in a taxi or wheelchair-accessible taxi.
- › Request journeys where bad weather, road conditions or traffic controls would make the trip unsafe or impractical.
- › Exceed the number of people permitted to be carried under the vehicle licence.
- › Have luggage or items which are larger or weigh more than the vehicle's luggage carrying capacity and can cause damage or a risk to health and safety.

SPSV DRIVER RESPONSIBILITIES

You also have certain responsibilities when dealing with the travelling public as outlined below.

FARES

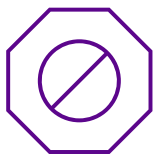
- › Taxis must have a working taximeter that is set properly and checked in line with the National Maximum Taxi Fare Order.
- › Taximeters must calculate the fare for every journey taken, even when a fare has been agreed in advance for the trip.
- › Taxi drivers may not charge more than the National Maximum Taxi Fare for any journey. They may charge less if they wish.
- › Hackneys and limousines must not charge more than the agreed fare.
- › Taxi drivers must have an in-taxi point of sale payment device and must accept cashless payments for taxi journeys when requested by customers.



RECEIPTS

A taxi driver must have the ability to print a receipt from the printer attached to the taximeter. They must offer it to the customer at the end of every journey. See *Chapter 7, Fares* for more details.

A hackney or limousine driver must make a written receipt available to the customer at the end of the journey. See *Chapter 7, Fares* for more details.



UNREASONABLE REFUSAL OF SERVICE

You cannot refuse service, except as outlined in your rights above. In particular, a taxi may not refuse short journeys (under 30 km).

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- › You must have a good knowledge of major routes and destinations, and you must follow any direction or route chosen by the passenger.
- › You must keep the vehicle clean and roadworthy.
- › You must offer help with luggage.

Chapter 8, Delivering customer satisfaction has additional information on delivering an exceptional customer experience.



GUIDE DOGS, ASSISTANCE ANIMALS AND MOBILITY AIDS

You must accept and carry guide dogs, assistance animals and mobility aids for passengers who need them, at no extra charge.

OPERATING IN MULTIPLE COUNTIES

If, as a taxi driver, you want to stand or ply for hire in any county other than the one in which you were originally licensed, you will need to pass the Area Knowledge Test for each additional county.

Apply for the test as described in *Chapter 11, Preparing for your test*.

When you apply, state that you want to take the Area Knowledge Test only. You will be asked for your SPSV driver licence number.

Bring your SPSV smart card or display card with you to the test. If you are successful, you will be given a driver display card showing the additional county for which you are licensed.

REGULATIONS

You must:

- › Understand the SPSV regulations.
- › Display the tamper-proof licence discs and driver display card.
- › Comply with seatbelt regulations.
- › Comply with the Road Traffic Act and other relevant regulations.
- › Stand or ply for hire only in the county or counties named on your driver display card(s) (in a taxi or wheelchair-accessible taxi).
- › Inform NTA as soon as possible if you change your address or any other contact details. Call the SPSV Information Line 0818 064 000 or write to NTA.
- › Tell the Gardaí if you change your address.

NOTE

It is an offence not to inform NTA in writing of your change of address within 21 days. This is important to ensure that you receive updates from NTA regarding your licence.





SPSV DRIVER CHECK APP

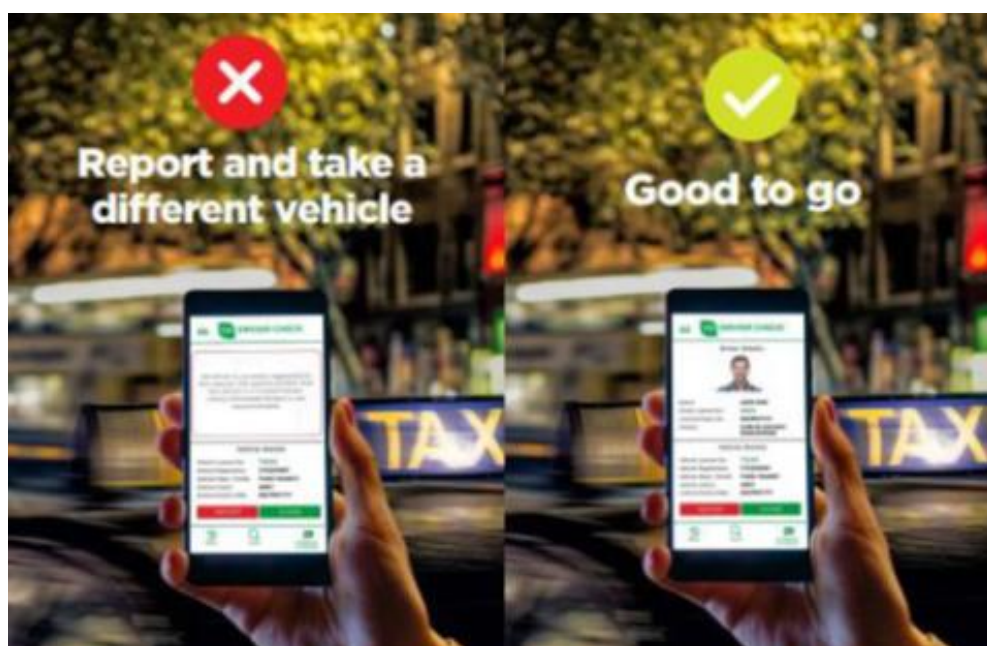
This is a safety app for passengers. The app shows a driver's name and the photo used in their licence application.

All active SPSV driver and vehicle licences are listed in the app. This means An Garda Síochána has checked, registered and approved the person to hold an SPSV driver licence.

The app allows people to:

- › Check if a driver and vehicle are licensed and on the SPSV Public Register.
- › Confirm that the driver is linked to the vehicle they are using.
- › Verify a driver's identity.

Passengers can use options on the app to verify and approve a driver, or they can report a driver and take a different vehicle.





3

CHAPTER 3: CHOOSING A VEHICLE TO USE AS AN SPSV

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Before buying a vehicle to use as an SPSV, make sure that it is suitable for use as an SPSV. NTA sets the minimum standards that must be met by all vehicles in the SPSV fleet.

This chapter deals with the standards required for vehicles entering the SPSV fleet and industry for the first time, either on new licences or as replacement vehicles on existing licences.

- › Vehicle standards for SPSVs
- › Roadworthiness
- › SPSV suitability
- › Wheelchair accessible vehicles
- › Requirements for limousines

3.1 VEHICLE STANDARDS FOR SPSVS

There are two types of standards for SPSVs.

1	ROADWORTHINESS STANDARDS These make sure that the vehicle is safe and well-maintained.	2	SPSV SPECIFIC SUITABILITY STANDARDS These focus on the vehicle's properties, age, comfort, size and additional equipment or special features like wheelchair accessibility.
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3.2 ROADWORTHINESS



The Road Safety Authority (RSA) sets the criteria used to assess the roadworthiness of all road vehicles. Testing is carried out by National Car Testing Services (NCTS).

An SPSV must pass the National Car Test (NCT) roadworthiness test within 90 days prior to being licensed as an SPSV. This is the same test that private motor cars are required to pass. For a vehicle that is less than three months old and that has travelled less than 3,000 kilometres, an NCT is not required.

To find out how to book an NCT roadworthiness test, visit www.ncts.ie. When booking your NCT, you should specify that the test is for SPSV licensing.

NOTE

The NCT certificate must be issued no earlier than 90 days before the SPSV Vehicle Inspection.

3.3 SPSV SUITABILITY

SUITABILITY STANDARDS

To make sure SPSVs are safe and comfortable, NTA has created a clear and detailed set of rules that all vehicles in the industry must follow.

The rules are explained in the NTA's Initial Suitability Inspection Manual, which you can find online at www.nationaltransport.ie. These standards aim to maintain the quality of vehicles in the SPSV industry, and they include minimum standards related to a vehicle's age, size, accessibility and comfort.

The main goal of these rules is to make sure that vehicles in the SPSV industry are of the highest quality.



SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT

All SPSVs must pass a suitability inspection (test) before they can be licensed for the first time. This inspection must be done again when it is time to renew your SPSV licence.

The rules for inspection can vary or change depending on the type of vehicle licence category and when the licence was first issued.

The inspection looks at the vehicle's specifications, features, age and condition. For wheelchair-accessible vehicles, the inspection also checks the additional equipment needed to carry wheelchairs.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

There are some general requirements that all SPSVs must meet.

- › All SPSVs must be mechanically propelled vehicles.
- › All SPSVs must be able to carry up to eight people, not counting the driver.
- › All SPSVs must weigh no more than 3,500 kg.
- › All SPSVs must have four wheels, except some limousines, and have four doors.
- › All SPSVs must be designed mainly for carrying passengers rather than goods; in other words, not a 'crew-cab' or 'pick-up' truck.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS



There are also specific technical requirements relating to the wheelbase, track width, side-to-side variation in wheelbases, tyre load rating and operation of the doors. These requirements are detailed in the Initial Suitability Inspection Manual.

VEHICLE AGE

The age of the vehicle is important because, while careful maintenance and servicing can keep a vehicle in good condition, newer vehicles have better safety and environmental features.

The rules on SPSV vehicle maximum age depend on several factors, including the licence category, the licensing application or transaction type and the vehicle licence history.

LICENCE APPLICATION OR TRANSACTION TYPE

- › Is it a new licence or a renewal?
- › Is there a change of vehicle?
- › Is there a change of licence category?

VEHICLE LICENCE HISTORY

- › When was the licence first issued?
As shown by the licence number.
- › When was the vehicle first linked to the licence?
- › Was the licence category changed?

For full age rules, see *Appendix A, Vehicle age rules*.

VEHICLE SIZE



Vehicles for taxi and hackney licences, standard and wheelchair accessible, must meet specific size rules. These are explained in the Initial Suitability Inspection Manual.

NTA has produced a list of vehicles by make and model, known as the Suitable Vehicle List, which tells you if a vehicle meets the size requirements or not. The list is available on NTA's website, www.nationaltransport.ie.

Before you buy any vehicle, check the Suitable Vehicle List. If your car is not listed, there is no information for it, or the information is incomplete, contact NTA.

TIP

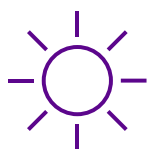
The Suitable Vehicle List is always being updated with new models joining the market.

LUGGAGE AREA

Regulations for the luggage area in an SPSV are as follows.

- › It must have the ability to hold a minimum capacity of 420 litres.
- › It must be able to fit a folded wheelchair, with a minimum box dimension of 735 mm x 330 mm x 805 mm.
- › The boot must be clean, dry and not be used for loose or unsecured items.
- › It must have a protector or cover for safety to stop luggage from causing injury to passengers in the event of an accident.

Some luggage size rules may be less strict for hybrid or electric vehicles. However, not all environmentally friendly vehicles are allowed fewer restrictions.



WINDOWS

The window regulations are:

- › The front windscreen must let in 70% of visible light.
- › It is okay to have a darker band at the top of the windscreen if it is not more than 125 mm in depth.
- › All side windows must be kept clean and in good working order.
- › All passenger side windows must also let in 70% light. In practice, this means that the glass behind the passenger area can be darker.

TIP

Check the approval number on the glass. If there is a Roman numeral V next to the European approval number, the glass is too dark, and it will not pass the Initial Suitability Inspection.

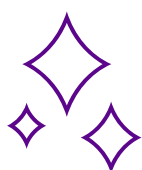
ROOF

Vehicles for taxi and hackney licences, standard and wheelchair accessible, must have a permanent solid roof. A properly fitted sunroof is allowed.

SEATS

The seat regulations are:

- › Seats, seat anchors, seat mechanisms, head restraints, seat belts and belt attachments must meet the relevant standards and regulations in the Initial Suitability Inspection Manual.
- › Side-facing seats are not permitted, except in limousines.
- › The minimum dimensions of the passenger seats, their height from the floor and the distance between them are specified in detail. They must be fitted exactly and with strict precision. See the Initial Suitability Inspection Manual for more details.



CLEANLINESS

The vehicle must be in good, clean condition.

The seats must be properly upholstered and comfortable, clean and in hygienic condition.

The exterior paint must be the same all over the vehicle. The vehicle must not have paint or bodywork repairs in progress.

INTERIOR LIGHTS

All standard inside lights must work.



TEMPERATURE CONTROL

The vehicle must be able to stay at 20° Celsius inside the passenger area even if it is -5°C outside.

BULL BARS

A 'bull bar' is an additional bumper or similar separate structure at the front of the vehicle. If this type of equipment is fitted, it must comply with EC Regulation 78/2009/EC.

3.4 WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE REQUIREMENTS

Wheelchair accessible taxis and wheelchair accessible hackneys must be built or converted to fit the following.

- › At least one person sitting in a wheelchair and at least one more adult passenger.
- › The vehicle must also be able to carry three adults when no wheelchair is on board.



VEHICLE MODIFICATIONS

All wheelchair accessible vehicles are modified vehicles. These structural or feature changes need to be formally certified. Licences are only given for vehicles that meet the standards explained in NTA's Initial Suitability

Inspection Manual, available on NTA's website, www.nationaltransport.ie.

There should be:

- › Wheelchair ramps or lifts.
- › Approved restraints to secure wheelchairs and wheelchair passengers.
- › An internationally recognised accessibility symbol on the roof sign of a wheelchair accessible taxi, or on the door of a wheelchair accessible hackney.

QUALIFICATION AND APPROVAL

These standards must be certified by a qualified Technical Assessor.

While testing your vehicle, the assessor will measure some items. Assessors rely on official test data and information from vehicle manufacturers, vehicle converters and from the suppliers and installers providing the accessibility parts.

TIP

The template for the Technical Assessor's Full Report is report is available from NTA's website. This exact template must be used.

NOTE

The Technical Assessor's Full Report must be dated no more than 60 days before the date of the Initial Suitability Inspection.

TECHNICAL ASSESSOR REQUIREMENTS

- ✓ They should hold at least one of the following qualifications or positions.
 - An engineering qualification, Level 7 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications – NFA and have completed a course accredited by Engineers Ireland.
 - Be accredited by Engineers Ireland as a Chartered or Associate Engineer.
 - Be a Member or Incorporated Member of the Institute of Automotive Engineer Assessors.
- ✓ They should have a minimum of five years' experience working in a suitable technical environment, preferably automotive or engineering.
- ✓ They should have access to good facilities and tools to carry out a fully detailed vehicle examination.
- ✓ They should have the correct professional indemnity insurance.

FURTHER INFORMATION

See www.engineersireland.ie, Accredited Course.



SUITABILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES

Requirements for wheelchair accessible vehicles are summarised in the Information Guide G9, available on NTA's website, but we have also included some of the main requirements below.

Some of the requirements require official documentation as evidence, while other requirements do not.

ELEMENTS REQUIRING DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Seatbelts Require EC approval markings or labels ('e' or 'E' marking).	Wheelchair occupant seatbelts Require approval markings or labels (usually ISO standard or 'e' or 'E' marking).	Wheelchair restraints (tie-downs) Require approval markings or labels (usually ISO, DIN, or FMVSS/SAE standard).
Seatbelt anchorages Require strength test reports (usually seatbelt to seat connection, based on Directive 76/115 EEC, as amended).	Seat and seatbelt anchorages Require test data. The suppliers of the flooring system may be able to provide the required test data.	User manuals Require information and instructions for both the vehicle and any specialist equipment in it.

Wheelchair and wheelchair occupant restraint anchorages

In-vehicle strength test reports. These tests are destructive and cannot be performed after the vehicle has been built or changed. They must have been performed on the same type of vehicle body shell (car body or chassis) and the results properly documented and certified.

ELEMENTS NOT REQUIRING DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Headroom Requires a minimum of 1,350 mm in the area near and around the wheelchair occupant during turning and restraining.	Doors Require a minimum of one wheelchair accessible door, at least 745 mm x 1,250 mm and one other door to the passenger compartment.	Window glass Require clear glass with at least 70% visible light transmission.	Seat height and legroom Requires specified minimums and maximums for seat height, width and clearance.
Solid surface access ramp Requires a maximum slope of 16°; capable of supporting 300 kg. If removable, the ramp must be suitable for handling. Securely fixed when in use, otherwise safely stored and marked with the vehicle registration number.	Internal and entrance lighting Requires enough targeted or localised lighting at entrance steps, signage, floor areas and money slots in any dividing screen.	External step at nearside or rear door Required where the opening height of the door exceeds 1150 mm. If the floor or an integrated step of the passenger compartment is more than 230 mm from the ground, an access step is required.	Handholds Required in the area near the doors, steps and central pathways. It must be in a colour that contrasts with adjacent surfaces and circular, approximately 35 mm in diameter.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For details and other requirements, see the Initial Suitability Inspection Manual.

3.5 REQUIREMENTS FOR LIMOUSINES

SIZE AND WEIGHT

While there are no interior size limits on limousines, the vehicle must be a passenger vehicle.

From its style and condition, it should be obvious and easy to see that it is suitable for hire for ceremonial occasions, like a wedding or for corporate and other important formal purposes.

NOTE

For licences given after 1 January 2013, the gross (total) vehicle weight must not exceed 3,500 kilograms.

MAKE AND MODEL



The vehicle must be a make and model specified by NTA or approved by NTA. An acceptable vehicle list is available on NTA's website.

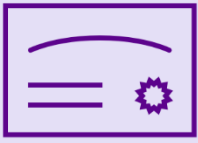
If the limousine you want to use is not on that list, please ensure you can confirm the vehicle's suitability with NTA before you buy it.

If a vehicle has been changed from its original specifications, for example, a stretched vehicle or a kit car and the technical assessor believes that the design characteristics are unique, then you must get a Technical Assessor's Basic Report for the vehicle before it is first licensed. This must be dated no earlier than 60 days before the Initial Suitability Inspection.

The template for this report is available from NTA and must always be used.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you are considering applying for a wheelchair accessible vehicle licence, or changing a vehicle associated with such a licence, you should read the Initial Suitability Inspection Manual and the related Information Guides. If you are still unsure, please contact the NTA for advice.



4

CHAPTER 4: VEHICLE LICENSING

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter describes vehicle licensing procedures.

- › About the SPSV vehicle licence
- › Applying for a vehicle licence
- › Renewing a vehicle licence
- › Replacing an expired vehicle licence
- › Changing the vehicle on a vehicle licence
- › Transferring a licence after the death of the vehicle licence holder
- › Changing to another licence category
- › Surrendering a vehicle licence

4.1 ABOUT THE SPSV VEHICLE LICENCE



If you want to use a vehicle as a taxi, wheelchair accessible taxi, hackney, wheelchair accessible hackney, local area hackney, or limousine, that vehicle must be licensed as a Small Public Service Vehicle (SPSV).

The NTA gives these licences to people or companies who meet certain rules and conditions and whose vehicles meet the required standards.

A vehicle licence can be held by one individual or by a company.

THE SPSV VEHICLE LICENCE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

What does the vehicle licence allow?

The licence lets a vehicle be used in one of the SPSV categories - this could be a taxi, wheelchair accessible taxi, a hackney, wheelchair accessible hackney, local area hackney, or a limousine.

How long does the licence last?

A vehicle licence can be valid for 12 months, 6 months, or until the vehicle reaches its age limit. See *Appendix A, Vehicle age rules* for details about age limits.

Can you change the vehicle on the licence?

Yes, but only if certain rules are met. See section *4.5 Changing the vehicle on a vehicle licence*.

Can you link more than one vehicle to the same licence?

No. Only one vehicle can be associated with a licence at any time.

Can a vehicle be licensed in more than one category?

No. A vehicle can only be licensed in one category at a time.

Can you transfer a vehicle licence to another person?

No. But if the licence holder dies, the licence can be passed to a previously nominated person. See section *4.6 Transferring a licence after the death of the vehicle licence holder*.

Can a company or a business transfer a vehicle licence to a different company?

No. If the company is sold or taken over, the licence is automatically revoked.

Can the licence category be changed?

Yes, sometimes in certain situations. A taxi licence can be changed to a wheelchair accessible taxi licence and vice versa. See section 4.7 *Changing to another licence category*.

Can the licence be sold?

No, a vehicle licence cannot be sold. Change of ownership of a vehicle licence is only possible when the current licence holder dies. See section 4.6 *Transferring a licence after the death of the vehicle licence holder*.

NOTE

Currently, the NTA is only accepting new licence applications for wheelchair accessible taxis, wheelchair accessible hackneys, local area hackneys and limousines.

4.2 APPLYING FOR A VEHICLE LICENCE

To apply for and get an SPSV licence, there are five steps to take:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Step 1 | Get the right vehicle. |
| Step 2 | Submit the application. |
| Step 3 | Equip the vehicle in line with SPSV regulations. |
| Step 4 | Get ready for the Initial Suitability Inspection. |
| Step 5 | Submit the vehicle for its Initial Suitability Inspection. |

STEP 1 – GET THE RIGHT VEHICLE



A vehicle licence can only be given to someone who is the registered owner of the vehicle or is legally allowed to use it (for example, under a car lease or hire-purchase agreement).

To get a licence to operate a vehicle as an SPSV, the vehicle must be roadworthy and suitable.

ROADWORTHY

You must have an NCT certificate of roadworthiness for the vehicle. This must be issued no more than 90 days before your Initial Suitability Inspection. See *Chapter 3, Choosing a vehicle to use as an SPSV*.

SUITABLE

The vehicle must meet the rules for operating as an SPSV in the category listed on the licence application. This includes the correct age and size of the vehicle. See *Chapter 3, Choosing a vehicle to use as an SPSV*.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Check the details in the Suitable Vehicle List, Information Guide G9 and The Initial Suitability Inspection Manual.

These can be found on NTA's website, www.nationaltransport.ie. For more information. Check *Appendix A, Vehicle age rules*.

A person who is permitted to remain in Ireland as the holder of an Immigration Stamp 2, student visa, issued by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of the Department of Justice and Equality is not permitted to hold an SPSV vehicle licence, nor may they rent a licensed vehicle to operate as an SPSV nor, with effect from 1 January 2015, may they work as a taxi driver either as an employee or in their own right. Such students may not engage in self-employment.

STEP 2 – SUBMIT THE APPLICATION



To apply for a new vehicle licence, complete Form VL1, which you can download from NTA's website.

Before you submit the form, make sure your tax affairs are in order, as NTA will check your tax clearance status with Revenue before issuing a licence.

FOR A WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLE LICENCE

If you are applying for a wheelchair accessible vehicle licence, you must include a copy of the Technical Assessor's Full Report (and supporting test data), as explained in *Chapter 3. Choosing a vehicle to use as an SPSV*.

FOR A LIMOUSINE LICENCE

If you are applying for a limousine licence related to a modified vehicle, you must include a copy of the Technical Assessor's Basic Report, as explained in *Chapter 3. Choosing a vehicle to use as an SPSV*.

FOR A LOCAL AREA HACKNEY LICENCE

If you are applying for a local area hackney licence, you must include proof that there is a need for a local area hackney service in your area, check *Appendix B, Local area hackneys*.

THE VL1 FORM MUST INCLUDE:

- › Contact details for booking the vehicle, so that passengers who require a wheelchair SPSV can contact you. This will appear on the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) Register.
- › The area where the vehicle will operate.
- › The days and times the vehicle will be available for hire.

NOTE

If you are not an Irish citizen, signing the VL1 confirms that you have permission to:

- be in the State, and
- operate a business or
- be self-employed in the State

Send your application, along with payment and any necessary supporting documents to:

SPSV Licensing Section
National Transport Authority
PO BOX 436
City North Business Park
Tuam Road
Galway

TIP

Do not send your
original documents.
Photocopies are
accepted.

If all the necessary information is received, NTA will process your application and respond within 5 to 10 working days. NTA can return any application that is not complete or filled out correctly.

NTA will check your tax clearance status with the Revenue. You do not need to send a Tax Clearance Certificate with your application, just your Irish social security number (Personal Public Service Number) PPS.

If the application is approved, NTA will send you a Conditional Offer letter. This letter will have a five-digit provisional licence number. For taxis and wheelchair accessible taxis, this number is needed to set up the taximeter and buy the roof sign and taxi branding.

The Conditional Offer letter is for the vehicle in the application, and it is valid for 90 days. During this time, you must finish the other steps to get your licence.

TIP







The Conditional Offer is
not a licence to operate
the vehicle as an SPSV.

STEP 3 – EQUIP THE VEHICLE ACCORDING TO SPSV REGULATIONS



You must display the correct In-Vehicle Information Card, which gives passengers useful information about their rights and responsibilities. This is available at the SPSV vehicle licensing centres around the country.

In addition to this, all SPSVs must also always carry the following safety and passenger communication equipment:

					
A fire extinguisher with at least 2 Kg of dry powder or the equivalent, to meet EN3 standards, with a current label and stored safely in the vehicle.	A first-aid kit that meets the DIN13164 standard or be a kit recommended by the Health & Safety Authority.	A high-visibility reflective safety vest that meets EN471 standards, with the standard shown on its label.	An advanced warning triangle that meets ECE Regulation 27 standards.	A working handheld torch.	A pen and paper to communicate with passengers who may have difficulty understanding or speaking.

NOTE

Some items in a first-aid kit have expiry dates and must be replaced from time to time. No items should be expired. This will be checked during the inspection.

ADVERTISING

ALL SPSVS

No advertisement, sign, or symbol with offensive, discriminatory, obscene words or images should be displayed inside or outside of an SPSV.

Unless NTA approves it in writing, you cannot use any electronic advertising signs that can be seen from outside the vehicle. Only the approved card payment symbol can be shown to indicate that card payments are accepted.

ADVERTISING IN OR ON HACKNEYS AND LIMOUSINES

A hackney or limousine cannot display any sign or advertisement unless it has been approved in writing by NTA.

EQUIPPING A VEHICLE FOR OPERATION AS A TAXI OR WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TAXI

Taxis and wheelchair accessible taxis must have a taximeter and printer installed and working according to the National Maximum Taxi Fare.

They must also have a regulation roof sign and display the approved taxi branding, as described below.

ABOUT TAXIMETERS



A taximeter is an electronic device that automatically calculates and displays the correct fare for a taxi ride, based on the National Maximum Taxi Fare.

Purchasing a taximeter

Many companies sell and install taximeters. While these companies are not regulated, the taximeters in SPSV vehicles must use programs approved by the Legal Metrology Service to calculate fares.

Choosing the right taximeter for you

Before choosing a taximeter, compare models and prices. Different models have different features and costs.

NOTE

New taximeters for sale must be EC-approved according to the Measuring Instruments Directive 2006.

Consider the following when buying a taximeter:

Location	Is there a good place to install the taximeter in your vehicle? Passengers need to see it clearly and it should not block your view when driving.
Cost of installation	Does the price of installation include the set-up of National Maximum Taxi Fare calculation and calibration, or do you need to arrange this separately? Remember, if the taximeter is not calibrated or set properly when you submit it for verification, it cannot be approved and you will have to return for another visit, which will cost extra money.
Reprogramming	Can the taximeter be easily reprogrammed if a new fare structure starts? How much does this reset cost?
Operating costs	What are the costs for things like receipt rolls, printer ink and more?
After-sales service	What type of support does the supplier offer after purchase?

Installing a taximeter



When you buy a vehicle for use as a taxi or wheelchair accessible taxi, you must have a taximeter installed and programmed before the Initial Suitability Inspection.

The taximeter must be set up with:

- › The vehicle's registration number.
- › The vehicles' licence number.
- › The correct fare structure.
- › The correct time and date.

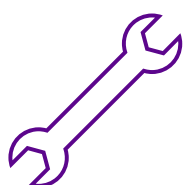
After the vehicle passes the Initial Suitability Inspection and you get the licence, you should make an appointment with the Legal Metrology Service to have the taximeter checked so that it cannot be tampered with.

TIP

Keep the letter confirming your appointment with you in the vehicle until the taximeter is sealed.

If you buy a vehicle that was previously a taxi and already has a taximeter, ask the previous owner for all the relevant documents (like operating guides, supplier contact details and the last verification date). The taximeter will need to be reprogrammed and verified with the new vehicle's licence number.

Fitting a taximeter



It must be securely attached in a place where passengers can easily see and read it.

The taximeter must be connected to a printer that can print receipts automatically.

The best place to install the taximeter is in the middle or central area above the dashboard if it does not obstruct any airbags.

NOTE

Every owner or user of a taximeter must have it checked by the Legal Metrology Service (part of the National Standards Authority of Ireland) to make sure it meets legal requirements. The NTA works with the Legal Metrology Service to regulate taximeters.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on taximeter verification and Legal Metrology Services, visit www.nsai.ie.

TAXI SIGNS AND BRANDING

All taxis and wheelchair accessible taxis must have special taxi signs, called branding, on the front doors. This branding must follow NTA rules and must include the vehicle's licence number.

Only suppliers approved by the NTA can put this branding on the vehicle.



All taxis and wheelchair accessible taxis must also have a regulation roof sign that meets NTA rules.

The sign must show:

- › The word 'TAXI' or 'TACSAÍ'.
- › The vehicle licence number and the words 'licence number' or 'uimhir cheadúnais'.
- › The county sticker(s) that show where the driver is allowed to ply for hire.
- › The wheelchair symbol, if the taxi is licensed to carry wheelchair users.

NOTE

If more than one driver uses the vehicle as a taxi and they are licensed to work in different counties, each driver may need a different roof sign.

Taxi and wheelchair accessible taxi roof signs are allowed to:

- › Display contact information for the taxi or dispatch company that the driver works with.
- › Display a credit or debit card symbol (as shown), indicating that cards are accepted. The symbol must be the one approved by the NTA. It can be printed as a sticker and then added to the roof sign.



NOTE

No other details can be shown on the roof sign. Information about the taxi driver's union or group is not allowed to be displayed on any part of the SPSV, including the roof sign.

Standard taxi roof sign (viewed from the front)



Standard taxi roof sign in Irish (viewed from the front)



Wheelchair accessible taxi roof sign in Irish (viewed from the front)



There is space available for additional area stickers or for dispatch operator/taxi contact details. Otherwise, it must remain blank.

Wheelchair accessible vehicles must display the accessibility symbol prominently front and back.

The vehicle licence number must be displayed front and back on this panel.

TIP

The taxi roof sign may be placed length-ways for journeys that are likely to exceed 30 kilometres. This will conserve fuel.

ROOF SIGN RULES

The roof sign must have a built-in light that works like this:

- ✓ The light must be on when the taxi is available for hire.
- ✓ The light must be off when the taxi is hired.
- ✓ You cannot add any extra lights to the roof sign.

The roof sign must also meet the following requirements.

- ✓ It must be firmly attached to the vehicle.
- ✓ It must be easy to remove when needed.
- ✓ It must be easy to read from the front and back of the vehicle.
- ✓ It must be displayed according to the rules in the Initial Suitability Inspection Manual. Any trusted roof sign supplier will know these rules (size, shape, colours and materials).
- ✓ It must be taken off when the vehicle is not working as a taxi and is parked in a public place.

STEP 4 – GET READY FOR THE INITIAL SUITABILITY INSPECTION



Now you need to gather the right documents and book your vehicle's Initial Suitability Inspection.

The Initial Suitability Inspection Manual, available on the NTA website, explains what will be checked during the inspection. It is a good idea to read it carefully so you know what to expect and you can get your vehicle ready. This will give you a better chance of passing the inspection.

DOCUMENTS YOU WILL NEED

1. An insurance certificate.
 - › The certificate must be a valid and original certificate.
 - › It must be in the name of the person applying for the licence; the names must match exactly. If they do not match, the inspection will fail.
 - › The certificate must show the vehicle registration number.
 - › It must state that the vehicle is covered for use as an SPSV.
2. Your NCT certificate. You do not need to bring this certificate; it is checked online at the time of booking.
 - › The NCT certificate must be for the same vehicle you want to license.
 - › The certificate must be issued within 90 days before your inspection.
3. Vehicle Registration Certificate (VRC). Bring the original VRC document, also known as a logbook.
4. If the vehicle is leased or under hire purchase, bring a letter on headed or official writing paper from the registered owner of the vehicle. The letter must say that you have the right to use the vehicle for at least 12 months.
5. A copy of the Technical Assessor's Full or Basic Report. This is only needed if it applies to your case. *See Chapter 4, Vehicle licensing.*

NTA checks most documents online and will also check your tax clearance with Revenue. The name on all your SPSV documents must match the name with Revenue.

BOOKING THE INITIAL SUITABILITY INSPECTION



Call 0818 064 000 to book your Initial Suitability Inspection.

Have these ready when you call:

- › Your insurance and NCT details.
- › Your PPSN.

NOTE

Only the person applying for the licence can make the booking.

You will be asked security questions to prove your identity.

THE BOOKING AGENT WILL CHECK THE FOLLOWING

- ☐ Your insurance and NCT.
- ☐ Your tax clearance.
- ☐ That you own the vehicle or are legally allowed to use it, for example, through a lease or hire-purchase deal.
- ☐ That you agree to the terms and conditions for getting a vehicle licence, which are included in your Conditional Offer letter.

An appointment for the Initial Suitability Inspection will only be given if all your documents are valid and approved.

The appointment must happen while your documents are still valid.

NOTE

The age of your vehicle is checked at the time of booking. If your vehicle is too old on the inspection date, you will not be given an appointment.

See Appendix A, Vehicle age rules.

CHANGING YOUR APPOINTMENT FOR VEHICLE LICENSING INSPECTION

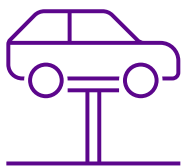


You can cancel or reschedule an appointment for a vehicle licensing inspection without charge up to two working days before the appointment.

If you cancel or reschedule on the working day immediately before the appointment, a late cancellation fee is charged.

You cannot cancel or reschedule a vehicle licensing inspection on the day of the appointment. If you do not present the vehicle for inspection at the appointed time, you lose the entire fee and you will not get a refund.

STEP 5 – SUBMIT THE VEHICLE FOR ITS INITIAL SUITABILITY INSPECTION



The Initial Suitability Inspection takes place at one of the vehicle licensing centres around the country. The inspection is designed to check and ensure that the vehicle meets the requirements for the category of SPSV you are applying for.

- › The vehicle is expected to be in good and clean condition, inside and out, when presented for inspection.
- › The luggage area should be free from personal objects and the required safety items should be easy to access for the inspector.
- › All windows and door locks should work properly.

If the vehicle has been changed from its original specification, you must bring a copy of the Technical Assessor's Full or Basic Report for the vehicle with you to the Initial Suitability Inspection. See *Chapter 3, Choosing a vehicle to use as an SPSV*.

Your tax clearance status will also be checked again on the day of inspection. Your vehicle insurance cover, insurance disc and certificate will also be checked.

Remember to bring your original insurance certificate with you to the inspection and make sure that the name on the certificate exactly matches the name on the licence application.

NOTE

If your vehicle is not correctly insured on the day of your Initial Suitability Inspection, the licence cannot be given to you.

The name on all your submitted documents must match exactly, as shown in the example below.

EXAMPLE

Name on the licence application	James Murphy
Names on the insurance certificate suitable for licensing	James Murphy
Names on the insurance certificate unsuitable for licensing	Jim Murphy, James Murphy Jnr, James J. Murphy, Séamus Ó Murchú

AFTER YOUR VEHICLE PASSES INSPECTION

When you meet NTA's licence rules and your vehicle passes the Initial Suitability Inspection, the Licensing Inspector will add your vehicle to the Register of Licensed SPSVs.

They will also place special tamper-proof licence discs on the front and back windows of your vehicle. For more about these discs, see *Chapter 5, Working as an SPSV operator*.

Your vehicle can now be used as an SPSV in the category shown on the licence. A licence certificate will be given to the person who brings the vehicle in for inspection.

A vehicle licence can last for one year, six months, or until the vehicle reaches its maximum age limit. See the next section in this chapter on renewing a vehicle licence.

NOTE

It is a crime to use a vehicle as an SPSV without a valid licence. A conditional offer is not a licence to operate.

4.3 RENEWING A VEHICLE LICENCE

LICENCE VALIDITY

A vehicle licence is usually valid for 12 months from the date it is issued. If your vehicle is more than 10 years old, the licence will be valid for only six months at a time.

An exception applies to vehicles licensed as limousines that were first registered before 1 January 1980. Licences for such 'vintage limousines' are renewed for twelve months.

If your vehicle is nearing its maximum age, the licence will last only until that age, either the 10th or 15th 'birthday', depending on the type of vehicle. Read *Appendix A, Vehicle age rules* for more details.

VALIDITY FOR LOCAL AREA HACKNEY LICENCES

A local area hackney licence can only be renewed for up to three years from the date it was first issued.

NOTE

It is a serious offence to use a vehicle as an SPSV without an active licence.

The maximum fine is €5,000.

WHEN AND HOW TO RENEW YOUR LICENCE



You can renew your licence up to 60 days before it expires.

The new licence starts the day after the old one ends, so renewing early will not shorten your licence time.

Not all inspection centres are open every day, and often, centres will be fully booked. It is highly recommended that you start your licence renewal in plenty of time to ensure the vehicle is inspected before the licence expires. If you renew late, there is an extra fee. See section *4.6 Replacing an expired vehicle licence*.

RENEWAL CONDITIONS

You can only renew a licence if:

1	You are the registered owner of the vehicle, or you have a legal right to use the vehicle, such as under a lease or hire-purchase agreement.	2	Your vehicle meets the age rules listed in <i>Appendix A, Vehicle age rules</i> .
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BOOKING YOUR LICENCE RENEWAL ASSESSMENT

The NTA usually sends a friendly reminder by letter or email before your licence expires.

You should read the Licence Renewal Assessment Manual on the NTA website. It tells you what will be checked and how the inspection works. Reading the manual and preparing your vehicle properly will help you pass the inspection and avoid delays.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

You must have the following items ready when calling to book your Licence Renewal Assessment, as you will need to give the details over the phone:

1. An insurance certificate.
2. An NCT certificate.
3. Your CCSN. This is your confidential customer service number included on all correspondence issued in relation to your SPSV licence.

These requirements are the same as for a new licence application, described in section *4.2 Applying for a vehicle licence*.

If your vehicle has been modified or changed since its last inspection, you will need to obtain a Technical Assessor's Basic Report, as described in *Chapter 3, Choosing a vehicle to use as an SPSV* and bring a copy with you to leave at the Licence Renewal Assessment.

BOOKING YOUR ASSESSMENT



Book your Licence Renewal Assessment by calling 0818 064 000.

The appointment can only be made only by the vehicle licence holder.
Security questions will be asked to confirm your identity.

- › NTA looks at and validates all documentation online at time of booking. It checks the ownership of your vehicle or your legal right to use and have it in your possession.
- › NTA checks your tax clearance status with Revenue, the name with Revenue and your SPSV licence must also be a match.
- › When booking your appointment, you will also be required to pay the licence renewal fee by credit or debit card.

You will be unable to book a Licence Renewal Assessment unless your documentation is validated and checked online. An appointment can be offered only when all required documents are valid and your vehicle meets the age rules.

SUBMITTING YOUR VEHICLE FOR ITS LICENCE RENEWAL ASSESSMENT



The Licence Renewal Assessment will take place at one of the vehicle licensing centres across the country.

During this check, the inspector will look at the condition of your vehicle and check that it still meets the legal standards to stay licensed.

On the day of your inspection, the inspector will check that your tax clearance and that your insurance is valid.

Your insurance disc and original certificate will also be reviewed. The name on your insurance certificate must exactly match the name on your vehicle licence. If your vehicle is not insured correctly, your licence will not be renewed.

Your vehicle must be clean, inside and outside, when you bring it to the centre.

Make sure the luggage area is empty.

Make sure all the safety equipment is easy for the inspector to find.

All doors, locks and windows must work properly.

If your vehicle passes the inspection:

1. The Licensing Inspector will update the National Register of Licensed SPSVs.
2. Remove the old tamper-proof licence discs and put new tamper-proof discs on your front and rear windows.

NOTE

Do not try to remove the tamper-proof discs yourself.

If you do not have the discs for any reason, call the NTA on 0818 064 000 before your inspection.

The licence cannot be renewed unless the old discs are returned.

Tamper-proof licence discs always remain the property of the NTA.

When this is done, your vehicle can be used as an SPSV in the correct category. You will also be given a licence certificate.

4.4 REPLACING AN EXPIRED VEHICLE LICENCE

NOTE

Vehicle licences that are expired for more than 24 months cannot be replaced.

If your licence expires, you have up to 24 months (two years) from the expiry date to apply for a replacement.

Extra fees apply when replacing an expired licence.

Local area hackney licences cannot be renewed or replaced more than 3 years after the date they were first issued.

4.5 CHANGING THE VEHICLE ON A VEHICLE LICENCE

You can switch the vehicle on your licence if the new vehicle is roadworthy, suitable for use as an SPSV and has the correct equipment. See *Chapter 3, Choosing a vehicle to use as an SPSV*.



It is your responsibility to make sure the new vehicle meets these rules before buying it. To help ensure your vehicle meets NTA regulations, check these documents on the NTA website:

- › Suitable Vehicle List
- › Information Guide G9
- › Initial Suitability Inspection Manual

Appendix A, Vehicle age rules, explains age limits for vehicles.

A licence can only be issued to the person who owns the vehicle or has a legal right to use it, through a lease or hire-purchase agreement.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE OLD VEHICLE

Before you get rid of your old vehicle, remove the tamper-proof licence discs from both the front and rear windows. You must bring these to the Initial Suitability Inspection of your new vehicle.

For taxis or wheelchair accessible taxis, remove:

- › The roof sign. You can use it on the new vehicle after the change is approved.
- › The taximeter and printer. These can be reused but must be reprogrammed and set up for the new vehicle.
- › The taxi branding on the front doors. This includes your licence number. You will need new branding for the new vehicle.

Some approved branding suppliers can remove the old branding for you (fees may apply).

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION



These requirements are the same as for a new licence application, described in section *4.2 Applying for a vehicle licence*.

Remember, bookings can only be made by the licence holder, and you will be unable to book an Initial Suitability Inspection unless your documentation is valid and verifiable online.

Book an appointment by calling 0818 064 000.

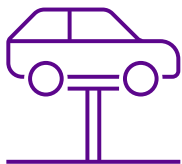
You must have the following things ready when calling to book the Initial Suitability Inspection for the replacement vehicle, as you will need to give the details over the phone:

- › Your CCSN. This is your confidential customer service number included on all correspondence issued for your SPSV licence.
- › An insurance certificate for the replacement vehicle.
- › An NCT certificate for the replacement vehicle.
- › Your credit/debit card details, to pay the licence and inspection fees when you book the appointment.

TIP

Remember, when you book, security questions will be asked to confirm your identity. The NTA will check ownership of the vehicle or your legal right to use and possess it, and they will validate all your documentation online.

INITIAL SUITABILITY INSPECTION



The Initial Suitability Inspection takes place at one of the vehicle licensing centres around the country.

The licence period for the new vehicle starts from the date of this inspection, no matter when the licence for the old vehicle was due to expire.

Once your vehicle passes this inspection and meets all the NTA's licensing rules, the Licensing Inspector will update the licence and put tamper-proof licence discs on the front and rear windows of the new vehicle.

NOTE

You are not allowed to operate the new vehicle as an SPSV until the full change-of-vehicle process has been completed.

TAXIMETER VERIFICATION – TAXIS AND WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TAXIS ONLY



After your vehicle passes the Initial Suitability Inspection and you get your licence, you must book an appointment with Legal Metrology Services to check and seal the taximeter.

Keep the appointment letter in the vehicle until the meter has been verified and sealed.

4.6 TRANSFERRING A LICENCE AFTER THE DEATH OF THE VEHICLE LICENCE HOLDER

If you hold an SPSV licence as an individual, you can name someone who can take over your licence if you die. This is not available for licences held by companies or businesses.

To do this, fill out Form S15N to nominate a person. That person will be linked to the licence you specify on the form.

The nominee must meet all the same conditions as someone applying for a new SPSV licence and must apply within 9 months of the licence holder's death.

When a vehicle licence holder dies, the person who was nominated can apply to take over the licence. If approved, they become the new licence holder and can renew and use the licence as normal.

4.7 CHANGING TO ANOTHER LICENCE CATEGORY

If you are replacing your vehicle, you can apply to switch your licence to a different category. Either from a standard taxi licence to a wheelchair accessible taxi licence, or from a wheelchair accessible licence to a standard one.

Your original licence number stays the same.

Age limits for vehicles during this process are explained in *Appendix A, Vehicle age rules*.

NOTE

If switching to a wheelchair accessible taxi licence, the new vehicle must meet the required accessibility standards.

4.8 SURRENDERING A VEHICLE LICENCE

When you surrender or give up a vehicle licence, it is permanently cancelled and cannot be used again. Only surrender your licence if you are sure that you will never need it in the future.

To surrender your licence:

- 1 Fill out the 'I wish to surrender this Licence' section on the back of your licence certificate.
- 2 Read the declaration, then sign and date it to confirm that you understand and agree.
- 3 Send the completed form and the tamper-proof licence discs to NTA at the address below.

SPSV Licensing Section
National Transport Authority
PO BOX 436
City North Business Park
Tuam Road
Galway



CHAPTER 5: WORKING AS AN SPSV OPERATOR

5

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter outlines the regulations that apply to SPSV vehicles and their drivers.

- › Vehicle requirements
- › Operating an SPSV owned by another person
- › Maintaining operational data
- › Rules of operation
- › Operating sustainably in the SPSV industry
- › Using taxi ranks
- › Using bus lanes
- › Using your roof sign
- › Using your cashless payment facility
- › Refusing a passenger
- › Keeping your vehicle in good condition
- › Compliance and following the rules
- › Fixed payment offences
- › Changing address or contact details on a licence

5.1 VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS

SPSV REGULATION COMPLIANCE

Any vehicle used as an SPSV must comply with the SPSV regulations. If a vehicle is used as an SPSV without a licence, both the driver and the vehicle owner can be charged with an offence.

NOTE

It is the driver's responsibility to make sure the vehicle they are driving follows the rules, even if someone else owns the vehicle or holds the licence.

REGULATIONS FOR ALL SPSVS

All SPSVs must:

- › Have an active vehicle licence, shown on the tamper-proof licence discs.
- › Display tamper-proof licence discs in both the front and rear windows.
- › Be in good working condition/fully roadworthy. It is illegal to operate a faulty vehicle.
- › Carry required safety equipment. See *Chapter 3, Choosing a vehicle to use as an SPSV*.
- › Not carry more passengers than the number listed on the tamper-proof licence discs.

TIP

Vintage (very old) vehicles in the limousine category that are over 30 years old, do not need to show a rear disc.

ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS

In addition to the SPSV regulations, additional regulations apply to taxis and wheelchair accessible taxis and hackneys.



Taxis must:

- › Have a taximeter that is calibrated and verified with the current National Maximum Taxi Fare and connected to a working printer.
- › Have a regulation roof sign.
- › Have approved taxi branding on the front doors.



Wheelchair accessible taxis must:

- › Have the accessibility symbol displayed on the regulation roof sign.
- › Have the required wheelchair equipment installed and functioning correctly.



Wheelchair accessible hackneys must:

- › Have the accessibility symbol displayed on a passenger door.
- › Have the required wheelchair equipment installed and functioning correctly.

TAMPER-PROOF LICENCE DISCS

Tamper-proof licence discs provide vehicle and licence details. They include:

- › The vehicle licence number and expiry date.
- › The vehicle registration number, colour and type.
- › The number of passengers the vehicle is licensed to carry.

The Licensing Inspector will place the tamper-proof licence discs on the front and rear windows when the vehicle passes the Initial Suitability Inspection or Licence Renewal Assessment.

NOTE

These discs are always the property of NTA.

COLOUR CODING FOR DISCS

All tamper-proof licence discs have a green ring on the outside, but the tamper-proof licence disc inside will be a different colour, depending on the type of SPSV.



Yellow for taxis and wheelchair accessible taxis.



Blue for hackneys, wheelchair accessible hackneys and local area hackneys.



Silver for limousines.

Below are examples of the different colour licence discs.

Taxi tamper-proof licence disc



Hackney tamper-proof licence disc



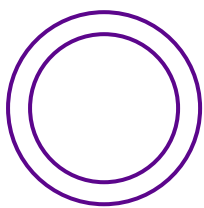
Limousine tamper-proof licence disc



Local area hackney tamper-proof licence disc



REMOVING AND DISPOSING OF TAMPER-PROOF LICENCE DISCS



Tamper-proof licence discs can only be removed and disposed of by a Licensing Inspector. However, you may need to arrange for removal yourself in the following cases:

- › Changing the vehicle linked to your licence
- › Replacing the windscreen
- › Selling or disposing of your vehicle
- › Surrendering your licence

Once removed, tamper-proof licence discs cannot be reused. It is an offence to use them on another vehicle.

If you get new tamper-proof licence discs, you must return the old ones during the inspection or provide proof that they have been safely destroyed, such as a report from An Garda Síochána or an insurance company.

Licensing staff will tell you what to do in these cases. If you have any questions about tamper-proof licence discs, call the SPSV Information Line at 0818 064 000.

NOTE

It is a serious crime to operate a vehicle as an SPSV without an active vehicle licence. The driver and the owner of the vehicle (if they are different people) can both be fined up to €5,000 for this offence.

5.2 OPERATING AN SPSV OWNED BY ANOTHER PERSON

An SPSV driver can drive a licensed vehicle that is licensed by another party and not owned by them (the driver) through a rental or lease arrangement. In both situations, there are obligations on the vehicle licence holder and the SPSV driver.

Vehicle licence holders must:

- › Ensure the driver is fully licensed to operate the vehicle as an SPSV.
- › Provide and maintain the appropriate SPSV insurance.
- › Keep a record with the name, address and contact number of each driver, along with their SPSV driver licence details.
- › Retain these records and make them available for inspection by the NTA when requested.

SPSV drivers operating a vehicle owned by someone else must:

- › Ensure the vehicle licence is valid.
- › Confirm the vehicle is roadworthy.
- › Ensure the vehicle has the proper insurance.
- › Make sure the vehicle fully complies (meets) with all relevant regulations.
- › Ensure the driver-to-vehicle link is correctly created.

A vehicle licence can be held by either an individual who is self-employed or a company. The licence holder does not have to be the person driving the associated SPSV.

Vehicles can be rented or leased to licensed SPSV drivers based on a financial agreement between both parties. In this scenario, a rental agreement must be in place between the vehicle licence holder and the SPSV driver. A copy of that agreement should be provided to NTA.

The NTA will only interact with the vehicle licence holder for licensing activities related to the rented or leased vehicle, such as scheduling an Initial Suitability Inspection. Therefore, even where a rental or lease agreement is in place, the vehicle licence holder must continue to make the inspection appointments for the vehicle.

When renting or leasing, vehicle licence holders must:

- › Ensure the driver is fully licensed to operate the vehicle as an SPSV.
- › Provide and maintain the appropriate SPSV insurance.
- › Communicate to the NTA about the rental agreement, including details such as the rental period, vehicle registration number and the driver's licence number.
- › Keep a record with the name, address, and contact details of each person or driver and their SPSV driver licence details.
- › Keep these records and make them available for NTA inspection.

SPSV drivers renting or leasing a vehicle must:

- › Ensure the vehicle licence is up-to-date and valid.
- › Confirm the vehicle is roadworthy.
- › Ensure the driver-to-vehicle link is correctly created.
- › Make sure the vehicle is properly insured.
- › Ensure the vehicle fully complies with all relevant regulations.

5.3 MAINTAINING OPERATIONAL DATA

NTA keeps a database that links each licensed SPSV to its current driver. It is the driver's responsibility to make sure this information is always up to date.

Drivers must notify the NTA whenever they start or take over operating an SPSV. A link can have an end date or be open-ended.

If you own and operate just one vehicle and it is never driven by anyone else, you only need to notify the NTA once about that vehicle. However, if the vehicle is driven by multiple drivers, each driver must advise the NTA every time they start operating that vehicle.

NOTE

Not notifying NTA about the driver-to-vehicle link is a criminal offence.

As a driver, you must create a new driver-to-vehicle link in the following cases:

- › Before you start driving an SPSV
- › If you change your vehicle
- › If your driver licence or vehicle licence expires

The driver-to-vehicle link information is also used in the NTA's public safety app, Driver Check. This app helps customers check if an SPSV (like a taxi or hackney) is properly licensed and registered before they hire it.

There are a few ways to create a link but the easiest and most used is the SPSV+ App. The SPSV+ App allows SPSV licence holders to complete their required notifications on the go. Once you have registered, you can use this app to add and update driver-to-vehicle links.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The NTA provides several ways for you to add or update rental agreements and driver-to-vehicle links. You can use:

- › NTA's SPSV Online Services at <https://spsvonline.nationaltransport.ie/>.
- › NTA's SPSV + App (it is free and available from the Apple and Android app stores).
- › The SPSV Information Line at 0818 064 000.
- › NTA's SMS (Text/Short Message Service).

For more information or to learn how to register and use these tools, visit NTA's website, www.nationaltransport.ie.








5.4 RULES OF OPERATION

Taxis can be hired by potential passengers:

- › At official taxi ranks (only while available for hire)
- › On the street (plying for hire)
- › By pre-booking

Taxis are allowed to use bus lanes that flow with regular traffic (with-flow bus lanes). See section *5.8 Using bus lanes*.

Taxis must:

-  Use a verified, calibrated taximeter to calculate the fare.
-  Charge either the fare shown on the meter or a lower amount, but not more than the National Maximum Taxi Fare.
-  Use the meter for all passenger journeys and keep a record of all bookings.
-  Print a receipt from the taximeter and offer it to the customer. See *Chapter 7, Fares*.
-  Have NTA-approved branding on the front doors and a regulation roof sign.
-  Never leave their taxi unattended at a rank.
-  Notify the NTA each time they begin operating a vehicle.

In addition to these rules:



Wheelchair accessible taxis must:

- › Have boarding aids/ramps, wheelchair anchorages and seatbelts.
- › Display the accessibility symbol on the roof sign.
- › Carry at least one wheelchair user and one other passenger.
- › Give booking priority to people with disabilities.



Wheelchair accessible hackneys must:

- › Have boarding aids/ramps, wheelchair anchorages and seatbelts.
- › Display the accessibility symbol on a passenger door.
- › Carry at least one wheelchair user and one other passenger.
- › Give booking priority to people with disabilities.
- › Keep a record of all bookings.



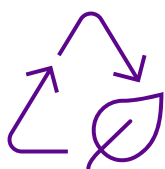
Local area hackneys must:

- › Only operate in the area listed on the licence.
- › Not provide or advertise services outside their specified area of operation.



Limousines must follow all hackney rules, except that they do not need to carry booking documents when working as part of a wedding or funeral service.

5.5 OPERATING SUSTAINABLY IN THE SPSV INDUSTRY



The vehicle you choose can either reduce or increase global emissions.

Your interactions with customers and leading by example, can create a positive culture of responsibility toward the environment. By adopting sustainable practices, you can reduce your environmental footprint while achieving your operational goals.

TIPS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Here are some ways you can operate sustainably as an SPSV driver:

Type of vehicle

Choose an eco-friendly vehicle, like a hybrid or electric vehicle, which produces fewer emissions and is better for the environment.

Vehicle condition

Keep your vehicle in good working condition by servicing and maintaining it regularly. A well-maintained vehicle runs more efficiently and uses less fuel.

Driving routes

Plan your routes carefully to ensure you take the most direct and efficient path. Avoiding traffic congestion reduces idle time, saves fuel, and reduces emissions.

Carpooling and ridesharing

Encourage passengers to share rides whenever possible. Fewer vehicles on the road means lower emissions and less congestion.

Fuel type

Consider using alternative fuels, such as biofuels or natural gas, which are more sustainable than traditional fossil fuels.

Style of driving

Use eco-friendly driving techniques, like smooth acceleration and braking, and maintain a steady speed to save fuel and reduce emissions.

SUSTAINABILITY AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Sustainable operations can help you stand out in the SPSV industry and increase business.

Eco-friendly products and services are becoming increasingly popular, and customers are more likely to choose a service that holds the same values toward the environment. By adopting sustainable practices, you can attract and retain customers who prioritise sustainability.



Adopting sustainable practices can provide both environmental and financial benefits. For example, electric vehicles (EVs) have lower maintenance costs compared to petrol-powered cars, which can save you money in the long run.

As investors and banks increasingly focus on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) factors when considering funding requests, SPSV drivers who implement sustainable practices are more likely to secure funding.

There are also monetary grants available for those who wish to purchase EVs or upgrade their existing vehicles to electric models.

5.6 USING TAXI RANKS



Local authorities, in consultation with An Garda Síochána, are responsible for planning and managing taxi ranks, including deciding their location, size, operating hours and maintenance. NTA offers advice and guidelines to local authorities but does not have a direct role in managing the ranks.

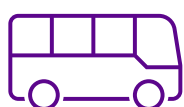
Taxi ranks can be permanent, part-time, or temporary (for example, during big public events like concerts).

Some taxi ranks are provided by other bodies on their own premises, like airports. To stand for hire at these types of ranks, SPSV drivers must get a special permit.

Here are the key rules for operating at a taxi rank:

- › Taxis at ranks must always be available for hire.
- › Do not leave your taxi unattended at a taxi rank.
- › Customers can choose which taxi to hire — they are not required to hire the first taxi in the queue.
- › Taxis can be hailed outside of a taxi rank or near the rank.
- › Hackneys and limousines cannot stand for hire at taxi ranks.
- › No extra charge to customers is allowed for hiring a taxi from a taxi rank.




5.7 USING BUS LANES



The Road Traffic Regulations 1997 allow taxis to use normal (with-flow) bus lanes while they are operating as an SPSV.

This means a taxi can use the bus lane while:

- › Carrying a passenger
- › Going to pick up a pre-booked customer
- › Plying for hire

	Taxis cannot use bus lanes if they are not operating as an SPSV (for example, driving home after a shift, on personal business, or transporting goods).
	Taxis are not allowed in contra-flow bus lanes, where traffic travels in the opposite direction.
	Hackneys and limousines are not allowed to use bus lanes.

5.8 USING YOUR ROOF SIGN

You must have your roof sign in place when operating a taxi or wheelchair accessible taxi and you must remove it when the vehicle is in a public area and not being operated as a taxi or wheelchair accessible taxi.

When operating a taxi or wheelchair accessible taxi, the roof sign must be:



On when available for hire (such as when standing at a taxi rank).



Off when not available for hire (for example, when carrying a passenger or traveling to pick up a pre-booked customer).

For journeys longer than 30 km outside urban areas, you may, with the passenger's agreement, position the roof sign lengthways to improve fuel efficiency and sustainability.

The roof sign light does not need to be linked to the taximeter and can be operated independently.

5.9 USING YOUR CASHLESS PAYMENT FACILITY

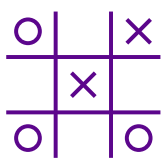
When operating a taxi or wheelchair accessible taxi, you must have a cashless payment facility and ensure it works properly. If the payment terminal is broken or the battery needs to be charged, you must withdraw from service.

The cashless payment device must be linked to the driver, not the vehicle. This allows the driver to be identified in the transaction history.

You must accept payments via Visa, Mastercard, American Express and digital wallets, and no surcharge or extra fee can be applied to cashless payments.

NOTE

A driver must be able to refund any payments in case of an error.



DEVICE PLACEMENT

It is not required to fit the payment device permanently, but if you choose to, ensure that:

- › The device does not block passengers' view of the taximeter or the driver's view of the road.
- › The device is securely mounted, not presenting a danger in case of collision.
- › The device does not interfere with other safety or control systems or placed on or next to important safety features such as airbags or navigation equipment. The performance and functionality of these safety systems are critical.
- › The way the device is charged does not interfere with any other safety, control, electrical, computer, navigation, satellite, or radio system in the vehicle.
- › The device is easy to access and does not interfere with passenger comfort.

If you follow these guidelines, your cashless payment system will meet the required standards and ensure safety and compliance.

HANDLING PAYMENT ISSUES WITH PASSENGERS

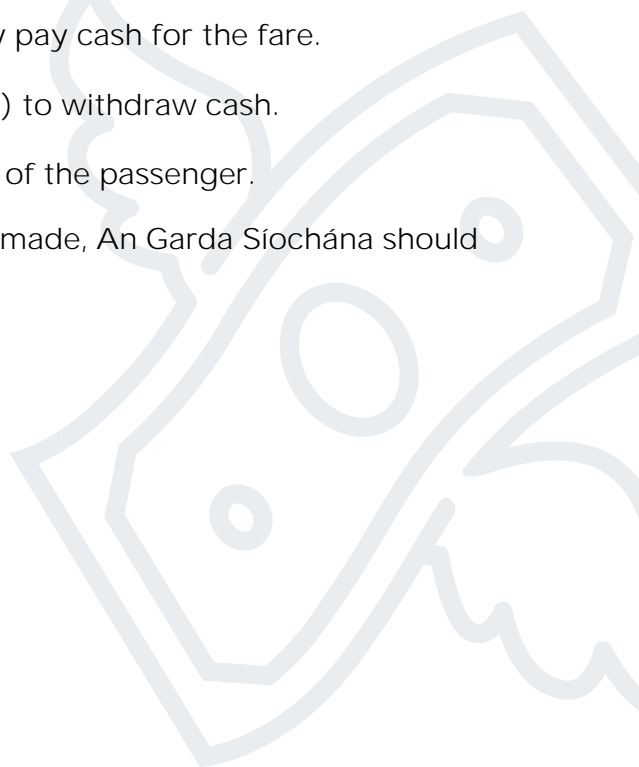
If there is an issue with a passenger's card payment, the following options are available:

- › The passenger can use another card, or they may pay cash for the fare.
- › The passenger can be taken to a cashpoint (ATM) to withdraw cash.
- › A third party (friend or family) can pay on behalf of the passenger.

If a passenger refuses to pay and no agreement can be made, An Garda Síochána should be contacted.

TIP

Under section 24 of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013, it is an offence for a person to hire a taxi and refuse to pay a fare calculated by a verified taximeter, without a reasonable excuse.



5.10 REFUSING A PASSENGER



As an SPSV driver, you have the right to refuse service in certain situations. You may request a passenger to leave the vehicle, or you may refuse to follow a passenger's instructions.

It is important to document the details of these incidents. This will help **explain the situation to NTA's compliance officers in case of a complaint.**

Reasons for refusing a passenger or requests include:

A journey over 30km in a taxi.

A disorderly, abusive, or offensive passenger.

A passenger who is consuming food or drink.

A passenger who could damage or dirty the vehicle.

A passenger with too much luggage that cannot be safely carried and is a danger to the driver and others.

A group of passengers that would exceed the vehicle's licensed passenger capacity, as shown on its tamper-proof licence discs.

A passenger who asks you to put your health or safety at risk, like carrying an unreasonably heavy load.

A passenger under 17 who refuses to wear a seatbelt but is of adult size.

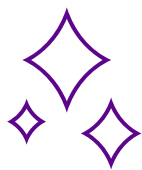
A small child who cannot be safely carried in the vehicle.

A passenger who refuses to show the ability to pay or refuses to pay a reasonable deposit before starting the journey.

A person who attempts to hire the vehicle to transport goods without passengers.

A passenger who refuses to put out a cigarette.

5.11 KEEPING YOUR VEHICLE IN GOOD CONDITION



To comply with regulations and provide a safe and comfortable service, you must keep your vehicle in good condition.

The Automobile Association (AA) recommends regular checks to prevent problems. Regular maintenance is typically cheaper and easier than ignoring something that may lead to a road-side breakdown and expensive repairs.

Follow the maintenance schedule in your vehicle owner's handbook, regularly inspect the brakes, tyres, lights and engine, and keep the vehicle clean inside and out.

AA VEHICLE CHECKLIST

TYRES



Check your tyre pressure often, including the spare. Tyres that do not have enough air can use more fuel. Most vehicles need tyre tread to be at least 1.6mm deep. Change your tyres before they become too worn or if they are damaged.

LIGHTS AND MIRRORS

Make sure your lights, indicators and mirrors are clean and working properly. They should be adjusted the right way. To check that your rear lights work, reverse toward a wall at night and use your mirrors to see the lights or ask someone to check for you.



OIL



Check the oil level often and top it up between oil changes. Look under your car for oil leaks. Always use the right type of oil – check your owner's handbook.

WINDSCREEN AND WIPERS

Clean your windscreen inside and outside. Make sure the washer fluid is full. Check that the wiper blades are working well and replace them if needed.



BATTERY AND WARNING LIGHTS

Check your battery. Listen for a slow engine start. It may mean the battery is weak. Watch the dashboard for warning lights, especially for the brakes or engine.



ADDITIONAL THINGS TO CHECK

- ☐ **Fluids** - Check all fluid levels, like battery and brake fluid. Top them up if they are low.
- ☐ **Battery cables** - Clean the battery terminals if they are rusty or dirty.
- ☐ **Hoses and belts** - Replace them if they are worn or damaged.
- ☐ **Brakes** - Inspect and listen for wear. Test the handbrake. Pay attention to brake noises or if the pedal feels soft or different.
- ☐ **Horn** - Make sure it works.
- ☐ **Exhaust system** - Listen for strange noises. Fixing parts like catalytic converters early can save money later.
- ☐ **Shock absorbers** - Bad shock absorbers can make your car unsafe and uncomfortable. If your car feels strange over bumps or makes noises, get it checked.

FURTHER INFORMATION

AA basic car checks: <https://www.theaa.com/breakdown-cover/advice/car-maintenance-tips>.

KEEPING COSTS DOWN

To keep your car running well and save money, it is important to take care of it. The AA says that by following a few easy tips, you can save fuel, pay less for repairs, and improve the trip for your passengers:

- › Drive smoothly and brake as gently as possible.
- › Speed up and slow down gently. Pay attention to the road and what is ahead of you.
- › Use the highest gear you can without making the engine work too hard. Change gears early when you can.
- › Turn off the engine if you are waiting in line for more than three minutes.

- › If it is safe and does not affect passenger comfort, turn off things like the air conditioning or heated windows when you do not need them.

5.12 COMPLIANCE AND FOLLOWING THE RULES

NTA is committed to ensuring that drivers and vehicles follow SPSV regulations. This helps honest, professional drivers do their jobs without being hurt by others who break the rules. High standards also help the travelling public to trust SPSV transport services.

NTA has a special team of compliance officers who check if drivers and cars are following the rules. They can investigate complaints, check vehicle standards, driver behaviour and identification, and make sure bookings and fares are correct.

If someone drives without a vehicle licence or uses a car that is unlicensed, NTA can prosecute and take them to court. Compliance officers can also give out ‘on-the-spot’ fines for certain fixed payment offences. You can find a list of these fines in section 5.13 *Fixed Payment Offences*.

NTA’S COMPLIANCE TEAM



NTA’s compliance officers help keep the industry safe and fair for the travelling public.

Most drivers do a great job and provide an excellent public service. The compliance officers are there to help them. Compliance officers can stop and check any driver while they are working.

Generally, it is just a quick check of the vehicle and driver. Other times, it is because someone has made a complaint that they need to investigate.

The NTA investigates all complaints fully. Sometimes, drivers or passengers may have an incorrect understanding of the rules, and after clarification, no further action is required.

As a driver, if a compliance officer comes to speak with you, they will:

- › Tell you who they are and show you their official ID card.
- › Be polite and respectful.
- › Understand that you are working and try not to delay or keep you too long.
- › Make sure that your vehicle meets industry standards. This could include checking your tamper-proof licence discs, In-Vehicle Information Card, safety equipment and cleanliness.

- › Check things like the roof sign, taximeter, printer, or wheelchair ramp, if you have them.
- › Check that your driver display card is clearly shown and that you have your ID card with you.

To help the compliance officers do their job and ensure things go smoothly and quickly, you should follow any reasonable requests that the officer makes.

NOTE

If you break certain rules, the compliance officer may give you a fine. If you do not pay the fine, you could be taken to court. This could lead to bigger fines, a criminal record, or even losing your licence.



AUTHORISED PERSONS

You must always give the right information and help to the authorities. These include NTA officers and An Garda Síochána. It is against the law to obstruct, impede, fail to comply with, or give false or misleading

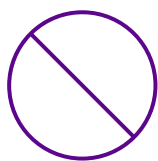
information to an authorised person.

These authorised persons have the power to ask for and take documents. They can and will go into places connected to taxi services, like dispatch offices, if they think it is needed for an investigation.

MANDATORY AREA KNOWLEDGE MODULE

If there are three or more complaints about you in three years related to not knowing your area well, NTA can ask you to take and pass the relevant Area Knowledge Module before you can renew your licence.

MANDATORY DISQUALIFICATION FROM DRIVING



If you have been found guilty of certain crimes listed in the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 (in Ireland or another country), you may not be allowed to hold a taxi driver licence.

In some cases, this can be a lifetime ban. In other cases, it is for a certain amount of time. You must tell the Gardai if this applies to you.

If you have been banned, you can apply to the court to lift the ban. If you think you might be affected by this, it is best to read the law carefully and get legal advice.

5.13 FIXED PAYMENT OFFENCES

These are the main fixed payment offences at the time of publication of this Manual. New offences may be added and categorised in the future.

The categories are SPSV operators, vehicle equipment, taximeters (for taxis only), standing or plying for hire, fares and charges. Fixed payment offences are as follows:

SPSV OPERATORS	
Taking off or trying to take off a tamper-proof licence disc.	€150
Not showing the tamper-proof licence disc.	€150
Not displaying the required driver ID.	€200
Not telling the NTA about the vehicle you are driving.	€200
VEHICLE EQUIPMENT	
Not following the rules for taxi roof signs.	€100
Not showing the required In-Vehicle Information Card.	€100
Showing signs or ads on a hackney or limousine that are not allowed by the NTA.	€80
Not meeting vehicle rules for your licence type.	€100
Not having the approved door signs on a taxi or wheelchair accessible taxi	€250

TAXIMETERS (TAXIS ONLY)

Not keeping the taximeter correctly calibrated.	€250
Not fitting or using the taximeter as required.	€150
Using the taximeter while the taxi is waiting for a fare.	€150
Not using the taximeter during a journey.	€150

STANDING OR PLYING FOR HIRE

Waiting at a taxi rank when not available for hire.	€80
Waiting for a fare at a place that is not an official stand.	€100
Operating in a county where you are not licensed.	€200
Stopping on the road near a full taxi rank instead of moving on.	€80

FARES AND CHARGES

Refusing a short journey under 30km without good reason.	€150
Refusing to carry a guide dog or assistance dog.	€250
Charging a booking fee when the taxi was not pre-booked.	€100
Not printing and offering a receipt at the end of a taxi journey.	€100
Not offering a receipt at the end of a hackney or limousine journey.	€100
Not carrying the required booking record for a hackney or limousine hire.	€80
Not carrying a cashless payment device.	€200
Refusing to accept a cashless payment.	€200
Refusing to carry a wheelchair user.	€250

NOTE

You must pay the amount in the fine notice within 28 days or pay the amount plus 50% within 56 days. If you do not pay within 56 days, court proceedings begin.



5.14 CHANGING ADDRESS OR CONTACT DETAILS ON A LICENCE

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

If you move to a new address or change your phone number or email, you must tell the NTA as soon as possible. You can do this by:

- › Using the SPSV Online Services system: <https://spsvonline.nationaltransport.ie/>.
- › Calling the SPSV Information Line at 0818 064 000.
- › Writing to the NTA.

This is important so that NTA can send you updates about your licence.

If you do not update your contact details, the NTA is not responsible if you miss any important messages.

NOTE

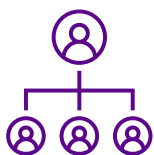
If you are an SPSV driver, you also need to tell An Garda Síochána when you change your address.

HAVING ANOTHER OCCUPATION OR WORK

If you are an SPSV driver and you start another job, you must tell An Garda Síochána.

You must give details about your employment, including the name and address of your employer (if you have one).

If the new job involves driving, you will need proof that your employer knows you have an SPSV driver licence and that you drive passengers for money.



COMPANY CONTROL

If a company holds a vehicle licence and the control of that company changes, the licence is no longer valid. It is automatically cancelled.

The company must:

- › Tell the NTA about the change in control.
- › Return the licence within 14 days of the change.
- › This rule does not apply if the change in control is because a company member has died.

CHANGES TO THE NATIONAL MAXIMUM TAXI FARE

If the National Maximum Taxi Fare changes, you must update the taximeter in your taxi or wheelchair accessible taxi with the new fare.

Most taximeters can be updated up to 90 days before the new fare starts. This helps drivers switch to the new fare on time and avoid losing customers.

After reprogramming, the taximeter must be checked and approved by the Legal Metrology Service as soon as possible.



CHAPTER 6: FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND

6

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter deals with ways of working out the best route to take your passenger to his or her destination.

- › The importance of route planning
- › Planning your journey
- › Reading a map
- › How to use your GPS

6.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF ROUTE PLANNING

As a professional SPSV driver, you are expected to get to a destination quickly, knowing your area better than most road users.

Collecting and dropping off passengers safely and on time is a very important part of the job. If you are unsure of the best route to take, you can check a map or use technology like GPS and phone apps to help find your way.

THE ADVANTAGES



It saves time.



It promotes safety.



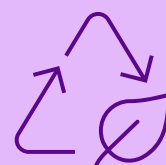
It reduces fuel costs.



It improves customer satisfaction, increasing your business.



It helps avoid heavy traffic and delays.



It supports the environment with smarter eco-driving.



ROUTE PLANNING TOOLS

Sometimes, the best route from A to B is not the shortest.

Good navigation is not just about having the latest smartphone or GPS. Effective destination management is a combination of:

- › Experience and knowledge.
- › Everyday communication tools.
- › Digital technology and applications.

EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

EXPERIENCE

Over time, drivers develop an understanding of the areas they operate in, for example, how long a journey will take at different times of the day or the best routes to take.

The longer you drive as a professional SPSV operator, the easier it will become to find your way around. After passing your SPSV Driver Entry Test, you can use modern technology to help you find your way.



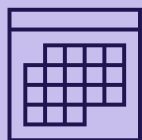
KNOWLEDGE

As an SPSV driver, you will also get to know popular locations and landmarks like hotels, airports, hospitals, stadiums, train and bus stations, and tourist and entertainment areas.

To help grow your knowledge, you can do the following.



Record or note things like shortcuts that can save time, and which daily destinations are slow during certain weather conditions or times of day.



Mark your calendar for important dates or events like Christmas, back-to-school, weather events, big sports games, or concerts.

These are all situations you will get used to hearing about and planning for.

NOTE





What you see and know will often take priority over what a device may tell you. For example, a device may show you a route through a city centre when you know there will be a St. Patrick's Day parade and street closures.

NOTE

You are the driver and knowing your area is your responsibility. Never follow a sat nav or GPS without using your own knowledge and expertise. Technology can be incorrect.

EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION TOOLS

To keep up to date on traffic and incidents in your area, there are some day-to-day tools that are very useful for professional drivers.

			
Updates from your dispatch operator and offices can offer real-time information and help with alternative routes.	National or local radio stations give regular traffic updates.	Local Gardaí, councils and AA Ireland may issue roadwork alerts or updates via their website or app.	Social media groups can also share information but ensure that you set up voice assist and only check your phone when you are not driving.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND APPLICATIONS

Today's SPSV drivers may use mapping technologies to help plan routes and navigate the road.

Technology can improve driver accuracy, safety and service quality, but you should always use technology in combination with your experience and everyday communication tools.

GPS

Before we look at how to read a map and use a GPS in the next sections of this chapter, here is a short explanation of how GPS technology works.

Sat nav, or satellite navigation, and a GPS, or Global Positioning System, work by using signals from a network of satellites orbiting Earth.

At any one time, your GPS device, for example, your phone or in-car system, connects to at least three or four satellites, calculating your exact location. GPS then uses mapping software to show your position on a map and provides directions in real-time as you move.

Ride-hailing software available online uses GPS maps to quickly connect drivers with passengers. This technology has an additional benefit of reducing wasted time and increasing business.

6.2 PLANNING YOUR JOURNEY

BE PREPARED FOR THE UNEXPECTED

- › Keep your vehicle serviced and in good condition, including the navigation system, tyres, brakes and safety equipment.
- › Check that all the devices you need are charged and working.
- › Have a backup plan for road closures, accidents and event or weather-related delays.
- › Check for traffic updates before you set off on your journey.



COMMUNICATION

- › Politely check customer directions and preferences when you pick them up.
- › Understand and take a minute to talk through any unclear requests or destinations – ask questions about the exact address.
- › Use your local knowledge to suggest quicker or cheaper ways when it is okay to do so.
- › Explain to passengers why you are taking a particular route and get their agreement. Remember, the customer's preference for a route should always be taken.

SAFETY

- › Be calm and confident when navigating. Even if you are lost, use your GPS safely. It is also okay to keep the customer informed of what is happening.
- › Do not use any devices while driving. If you are having technical issues, let the customer know discreetly yet safely.



GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR GPS

- › You can visually connect what you see on an interactive map with actual roads and landmarks.
- › Pin your location in real-time, helping to measure travel distances.
- › You can zoom in or enlarge areas on the map for improved visibility and accessibility, when safe to do so.
- › Adjust your route based on traffic or missed turns.
- › Drive safely with your eyes on the road while listening to audio instructions.

NOTE

Keep the following in mind when using technology and applications to help you find your way around.

Constant usage makes it difficult for you to disconnect and take breaks. Technology and apps are not 100% reliable, and using devices, even hands-free ones, disrupts your concentration.

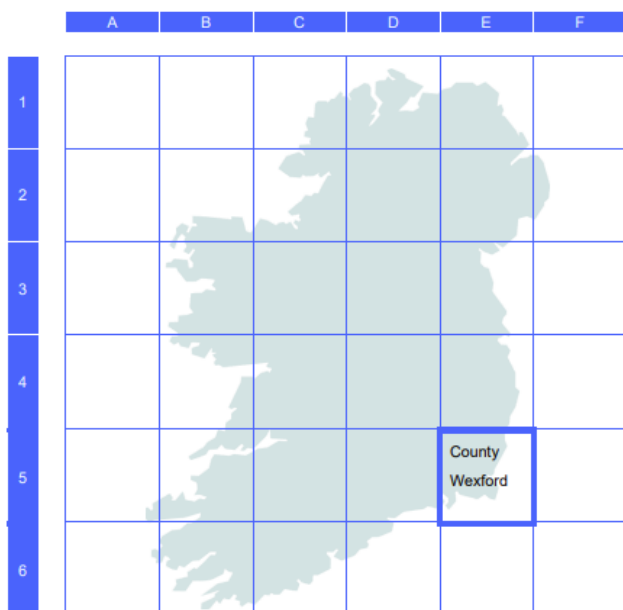
6.3 READING A MAP

Paper maps do not move or change and can take more work to read. However, they are a good backup when the internet or your mobile service is not available.

Creating routes manually can help you understand routes, directions and the layout of an area if you need to use an offline map in places where digital signals might be weak or unavailable.

This section will help you understand the elements of a map so that you can confidently use a paper map when you need to.

GRID REFERENCES AND INDEXES



Maps use a grid system to help pin-point exact locations on the map. Usually, the areas between horizontal lines have numbers and those between vertical lines have letters.

In town or city maps, the index contains a list of all the streets on the map along with their associated grid reference.

As an example, in the image shown, the blue square has the grid reference E5, which roughly corresponds to County Wexford.

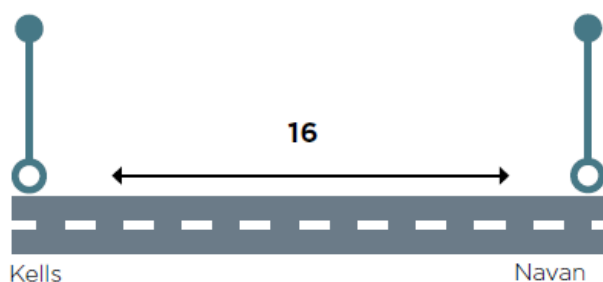


PLACE NAMES

Cities and larger towns are usually written in bigger or bolder letters, or in capital letters, for example, Dublin, Galway, Cork.

MAP DISTANCES

Some maps include distances in miles or kilometres, measured between two markers. The example shown indicates the distance in kilometres between Kells and Navan.



SCALES AND SCALE BARS

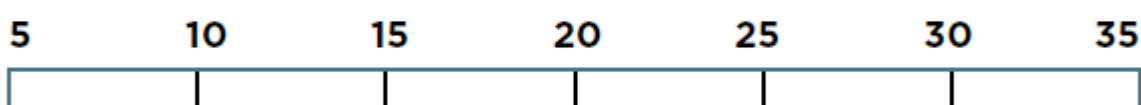


Maps also have a scale bar so you can visualise the distances on the map.

The scale shows the relationship of distances on the map to the real-world distance. You can use this information to calculate the distance between two locations.

For example, if the map scale is 1:450 000, it means that everything on the map is 450,000 times smaller than the real-world version. So, if two locations on the map are separated by 1 cm, they are actually 4.5 km apart.

Scale 1:450 000 (1cm = 4.5km)



MAP LEGENDS AND SYMBOLS

<div> <div>+</div> <div>Church</div> </div> <div> <div>P</div> <div>Parking</div> </div> <div> <div>PA</div> <div>Picnic Area</div> </div> <div> <div>PO</div> <div>Post Office</div> </div> <div> <div>FS</div> <div>Fire Station</div> </div> <div> <div>H</div> <div>Hospital</div> </div> <div> <div>★</div> <div>Garda</div> </div> <div> <div>i</div> <div>Tourist Information</div> </div>	<div> <div>GG</div> <div>Gaelic Ground</div> </div> <div> <div>LI</div> <div>Library</div> </div> <div> <div>RG</div> <div>Rugby Ground</div> </div> <div> <div>SG</div> <div>Soccer Ground</div> </div> <div> <div>SC</div> <div>Shopping Complex</div> </div> <div> <div>TH</div> <div>Theatre</div> </div> <div> <div>GC</div> <div>Golf Course</div> </div>	<div> <div>OR</div> <div>Other Roads/Streets</div> </div> <div> <div>PS</div> <div>Pedestrian Street</div> </div> <div> <div>WT</div> <div>Walking Trail</div> </div> <div> <div>GA</div> <div>Green Area</div> </div> <div> <div>BN</div> <div>Building of Note</div> </div> <div> <div>RL</div> <div>Metro</div> <div>Rail Line - Rail/Metro Station</div> </div> <div> <div>W</div> <div>Water</div> </div> <div> <div>A</div> <div>Airport</div> </div>
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The map legend or key explains the meaning of the symbols used on the map. This includes roads, buildings, or parks, and standard symbols to show the location of landmarks like schools, hospitals, railway stations, public parking and shopping centres.

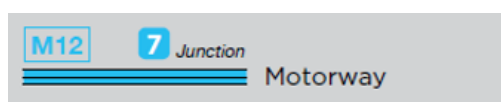
If you do not know what a symbol on the map means, check the map legend.

MOTORWAYS

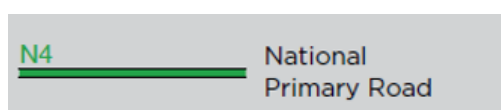
On traditional paper or offline maps like the Ordnance Survey or AA Road Atlas, roads are typically colour-coded to help identify the different road types.

There are standard colours used. However, you should always check the legend on the specific map you are using, as styles can differ between publishers and online versions.

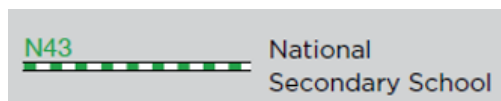
Each type of road is marked with a different colour and line thickness. Main roads are usually thicker.



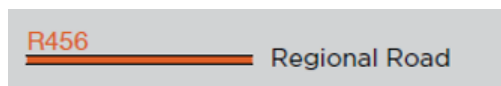
Motorways (M roads) are blue. Examples, M1, M50.



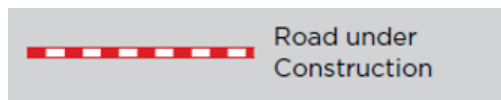
National primary roads (N1, N7) are usually green.



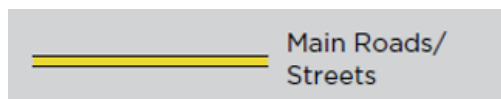
National secondary roads (N51, N99) are usually green and white striped.



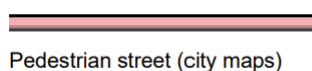
Regional roads (R-prefixed) are usually red.



Roads under construction can have dashed or dotted lines in grey, black or red.



Local roads are shown in yellow or white.



Pedestrian streets, footpaths or areas can be pink or light brown on some tourist or city centre maps.

HOW TO FIND A LOCATION ON A MAP

Follow the steps below to find a location on a map.

1

Identify the grid square your location is likely to be in.

2

If necessary, look up the exact location in the map index.

3

Use the reference from the index to find the location on the map.

Very small streets may be indicated by a number rather than a name. In an index, the grid reference for a small street will be followed by the number, for example, A26.



6.4 HOW TO USE YOUR GPS

USING GPS TECHNOLOGY SAFELY

- › Use reliable, legal and approved GPS tools and apps based on your experience and industry information.
- › Make sure your GPS does not block your view of the road. A phone or GPS is best positioned just below or beside your eyeline, so you can look at directions without turning your head from the road.
- › Use a strong GPS attachment or phone holder that attaches to your windshield, dashboard, or air vent holder and holds the device securely.
- › Use a secondary GPS if the first fails. This could be a backup app or even a paper map for emergencies.
- › If using your phone for navigation, keep your phone charged and have a car charger and a backup power bank in your vehicle.



BEFORE THE JOURNEY

- › Open your GPS app before driving. Set your destination and review the route.
- › Turn on voice instructions or assistive technology so you can keep your eyes on the road instead of looking at the screen.
- › Do a quick sound check. Make sure the volume is loud enough to hear, but not too loud for passenger comfort.

DURING THE JOURNEY

- › GPS apps can use device batteries quickly. Make sure you can plug your phone into a car charger to keep it powered throughout your shift.
- › Do not interact with the device while driving.
- › If you need to change the route or settings, stop and pull over safely first.

NOTE

To avoid theft, remove your GPS or smartphone when leaving the car or after finishing work for the day.

RESOURCES

Here are some additional resources and links.

An Garda Síochána provides updates on road safety campaigns, traffic enforcement and incident reports.

www.garda.ie/en/

Irish Rail offers information on train schedules that can impact city traffic flow.

www.irishrail.ie

Discover Ireland is useful for drivers working in tourism and highlights major events that may affect traffic or passenger demand. The site also has an online map.

www.discoverireland.ie/

Live traffic updates on local and national radio stations.

For example, RTE Radio, Dublin City FM, or LiveDrive 103.2FM.

AA Route Planner Ireland, website and app.

www.theaa.com/route-planner/route

Tailte Eireann sells maps that can help you become familiar with your area, Irish road networks, town layouts and rural locations.

www.tailte.ie

Collins Road Atlas Ireland

Available at shops or service stations.

An Post supports the use of Eircode, Ireland's postcode system, which can help taxi drivers locate precise addresses. Eircodes are especially helpful in rural areas or confusing city layouts.

<https://finder.eircode.ie/#/>

A variety of GPS applications and software that provide directions and voice-guided navigation and support.

For example, Google Maps, Apple Maps, etc., available through the relevant app store.



CHAPTER 7: FARES

7

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter deals with how fares are calculated and charged for each journey.

- › Taxi fares
- › Hackney and limousine fares
- › Getting paid
- › Staying compliant

7.1 TAXI FARES

In 2006, a new rule was introduced to help develop and improve taxi services all over the country – the whole country became one single taximeter area. This means there is a standard taxi fare for everyone across the country.

In accordance with legal requirements, NTA regularly undertakes a review of the National Maximum Taxi Fare to ensure that the cost of providing the service to the public is reflected in the fares charged by SPSV drivers.

The National Maximum Taxi Fare is set out in the National Maximum Taxi Fares Order. The latest such Order came into law on 1 December 2024.

GETTING STARTED

When does a journey begin and when can the taximeter be turned on? There are two possibilities depending on whether the trip is pre-booked or not.



AD HOC TRIP

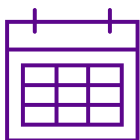
This is where a passenger hires a taxi from a taxi rank or hails a taxi in the street.

JOURNEY START

An ad hoc trip starts when you agree to take the passenger.

WHEN TO START THE TAXIMETER

You can turn on the taximeter for ad hoc journeys as soon as you agree to take the passenger, for example, before helping them with their bags.



PRE-BOOKED TRIP

This is where a passenger has pre-booked a trip.

JOURNEY START

A pre-booked trip starts when you meet the passenger at the agreed time.

WHEN TO START THE TAXIMETER

You can start the meter when you arrive at the right place at the right time, not earlier.

Delays by the passenger are charged as waiting time and any time delays during a trip, are also charged.

TAXIMETERS

HOW FARES ARE CALCULATED

The maximum fare that a taxi or wheelchair accessible taxi can charge is set by the National Maximum Taxi Fare Order. This fare is programmed into a taximeter, which must be installed in every taxi and wheelchair-accessible taxi.

Passengers have the right to have the whole fare calculated using the taximeter. The amount shown on the taximeter is the highest amount the driver can charge, even if a different fare was agreed to before the trip.

NOTE

If the agreed fare is less than the meter shows, the driver must only charge the agreed amount.

The calculation of the fare is based on the following.

- › When the journey happens. Standard, Premium, or Special rates might apply.
- › How far the journey is or how long it takes.
- › Which additional charges may apply. The initial charge always applies, but additional charges and tariffs may be added.

The initial charge is fixed and covers travel for up to 500 metres or 85 seconds, whichever comes first. After that, the taximeter adds charges based on distance and time if the speed goes below 21.2 km/h.



THE NATIONAL MAXIMUM TAXI FARE ORDER

This section summarises the main features and tariffs of the National Maximum Taxi Fare Order, effective from 1 December 2024.

There are three different rate types. Standard, Premium and Special. Each type has a specific time frame, initial charge and additional tariffs for distance and time.

Standard rates

Standard rates show as a “1” on a taximeter.

When standard rates apply	8 AM to 8 PM, Monday to Saturday, excluding holidays.
Initial charge	€4.40
Additional charges for Tariff A apply to the next 15 km or 43 min	€1.32 per km or €0.47 per min up to €23.60.
Additional charges for Tariff B apply to anything after that	€1.72 per km or €0.61 per min.

Premium rates

Premium rates show as “2” on a taximeter.

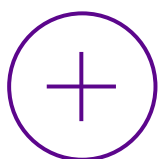
When premium rates apply	8 PM to 8 AM Monday to Saturday, all day Sunday, and most holidays.
Initial charge	€5.40
Additional charges for Tariff A apply to the next 15 km or 43 min	€1.81 per km or €0.64 per min up to €31.80.

Additional charges for Tariff B apply to anything after that	€2.20 per km or €0.78 per min.
--	--------------------------------

Special rates

Special rates show as “3” on a taximeter.

When special rates apply	12 AM midnight to 4 AM Saturdays and Sundays. During Christmas from 8 PM, 24 December to 8 AM, 26 December. And over New Year from 8 PM, 31 December to 8 AM, 1 January.
Initial charge	€5.40
Additional charges for Tariff A apply to the next 15 km or 43 min	€2.20 per km or €0.78 per min after the initial charge.
Additional charges for Tariff B apply to anything after that	€2.20 per km or €0.78 per min.



EXTRA CHARGES

Apart from the fare calculated on time/distance and rate type, as shown above, the driver can choose to charge extra for the following.

- › **Booking fees:** €3 for a pre-booked taxi. The charge for booking is recorded on the taximeter.
- › **Extra passengers:** €1 for each additional adult.
 - › One child under 12 is free.
 - › 2–3 children under 12 = €1.
 - › 4–5 children = €2.
 - › 6–7 children = €3.

Charges for extra passengers are recorded on the taximeter.

- › **Road tolls:** You may have to pay for tolls during the trip.
- › **Damage or stains:** If someone makes a mess, dirties or damages the taxi, you can charge up to €140 for cleaning or repairs. The cost might be lower, so only charge the actual cost of repair.

Extra charges are listed on the In-Vehicle Information Card. They are flexible, which means you can choose to apply them or not. However, if extra charges are going to be very high, you should make that clear to the customer before the journey.

NOTE

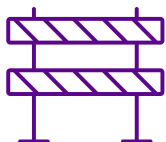
Extra charges must not be applied for assistance dogs or carrying luggage.

BOOKING FEES

As mentioned in the previous section, SPSV drivers can charge a €3 booking fee if the ride is booked.

TIP

Booking fees do not apply if a customer hails you on the street or hires you at a taxi rank, airport, or other transport station.



ROAD TOLLS

Trips may include a road toll. Passengers have the right to choose the route, even if you do not agree.

If a passenger chooses a route with a toll, you can add the toll cost to the fare. The toll fee must be shown on the receipt.

If a road toll might be part of the trip, you should do the following.

- › Tell the passenger about other route options and what each one might cost or how long it might take.
- › Tell the passenger what the toll will cost.

NOTE

If you use an electronic toll tag, like for the Port Tunnel, the cost might not be clear to passengers. Keep a list of toll prices in your taxi for customers to reference.

FURTHER INFORMATION

See NTA's website www.nationaltransport.ie for more information on the National Maximum Taxi Fare Order.

DISCOUNTS

As a taxi driver you have the right to charge the amount calculated on the taximeter, plus any valid extras, such as road tolls.

You can also charge less than the calculated amount on the taximeter as a discount if you wish. If you give a discount, you should write it on the receipt.

NOTE

Remember, you cannot charge more than the amount calculated, plus any valid extras, such as road tolls.

PAYMENT



All taxi drivers must have a working cashless payment device for card payments.

If your card machine is broken or the battery is flat, you must stop your services until it is fixed, or the battery is charged.

NOTE

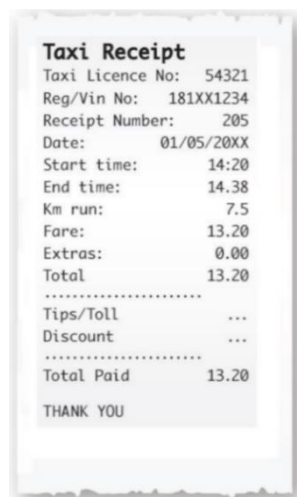
There is no minimum fare for paying by card and you cannot charge extra for accepting a card payment.

RECEIPTS

The taximeter must always be switched on and calculating trips, even if you and the customer agreed on a fare before the trip.

You must offer a printed receipt from the taximeter to every customer. It cannot be handwritten.

If a customer pays more or less than what is on the meter, you should write the reason for the difference on the printed receipt.



7.2 HACKNEY AND LIMOUSINE FARES

Customers must pre-book hackneys and limousines and agree to the fare before the journey starts, and at the end of each trip, the driver must give the passenger a receipt.

BOOKING DOCUMENTS

The driver of a hackney or limousine must always carry a booking document in their vehicle showing the details of the booking.

Booking documents should be kept in the vehicle from the time the booking is received to the end of the journey.

The details in the booking document must include:

- › The name and contact details of the person booking the trip.
- › The pickup and drop-off points.
- › The agreed fare.

NOTE

Booking documents and receipts are not required where passengers have pre-existing payment accounts or when a limousine is used for weddings or funerals.

Receipt	
Date	06-01-20XX
Receipt Number	0601
SPSV Licence Number	54321
Registration Number	181XX12345
Distance In Kilometres	13.5
Total	€17.50
Signature	

Receipt	
Date	20-01-20XX
Receipt Number	0601
SPSV Licence Number	54321
Registration Number	181XX12345
Total	€17.50
Signature	

DRIVER RECORDS

Hackney and limousine drivers must keep records of all their trips.

The NTA may ask to see these records at any time. Driver records should include:

- › The trips they have completed.
- › The fares they have charged.
- › The receipts they have given.

7.3 GETTING PAID

At the end of a trip, customers have the right to be charged the correct fare, and you have the right to be paid the correct fare.

There are, however, some key differences with payments for certain vehicle categories.

PAYMENTS FOR TAXIS

- › Taxi fares are calculated and shown on the taximeter.
- › You can give a discount if you choose.
- › You cannot charge more than what the meter shows.

PAYMENTS FOR HACKNEYS AND LIMOUSINES

The fare must be agreed in advance between the driver or their office and the customer.

7.4 STAYING COMPLIANT



FARE COMPLAINTS

NTA compliance officers check that drivers follow SPSV rules and regulations for fares and charges. If there is a complaint or someone reports an issue, NTA compliance officers can investigate.

If you break the rules for fares or charges, you may have to pay a fixed payment penalty for committing an offence.

Complaints can be submitted through NTA's website, www.transportforireland.ie.



CHAPTER 8: DELIVERING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

8

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter deals with the subject of customer service.

- › NTA's role in customer service
- › Good customer service is good for business
- › The customer's rights and responsibilities
- › Aspects of good customer service
- › Assisting customers with disabilities
- › Diversity and equality
- › Dealing with complaints
- › Dealing with difficult customers
- › Lost property

8.1 NTA'S ROLE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

As an SPSV operator, you are working in the service industry. This means it is very important to give your customers a safe, efficient and high-quality service. Good service helps your passengers, and it helps your business too.



SPSV operators offer a special type of transport service. It is a public service that runs 24 hours a day and brings people right to their doors. You often deal with customers face-to-face, inside the small space of your vehicle. This can be a challenge, but it also gives you the chance to provide great customer service that your passengers will remember.

One of NTA's objectives is to make sure all SPSV operators give a professional, safe and friendly service. To help with this, the NTA supports passengers in three ways:



DRIVER CHECK CUSTOMER APP

Passengers can check a driver's and a vehicle's details before or during a trip. (The app is free to download from the Apple App Store for iPhone and iPad, or Google Play store for Android devices).



NTA'S WEBSITE

<https://www.transportforireland.ie/> gives helpful consumer information about SPSVs and other public transport. Passengers can also use it to send compliments about excellent service or make complaints.



NTA'S SPSV INFORMATION LINE

The public and SPSV users can call 0818 064 000 to ask questions or share feedback about the service. Passengers can also use it to send compliments about excellent service or make complaints.

Transport for Ireland's (TFI) Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) Register – allows wheelchair users to identify WAV licence holders in their area. The booking details provided by the licence holder will be available on the register.

8.2 GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS



Customers expect a professional SPSV service. When you treat passengers with respect and you are polite and helpful, they are more likely to enjoy the ride. They may use your service again, give you a good tip and tell family, friends and work colleagues about you. High standards also help to promote and recognise the excellence provided by the SPSV industry.

Good service also means fewer complaints. It can help you deal with difficult passengers more easily. As an SPSV operator, this can reduce stress and help make your work more enjoyable.

8.3 THE CUSTOMER'S RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Every customer has rights and responsibilities when using an SPSV vehicle. These are shown on the In-Vehicle Information Card.

FARES AND RECEIPTS

TAXI DRIVERS

Taxi drivers cannot charge more than what the taximeter shows, even if something different was agreed or written down before a journey.

HACKNEY AND LIMOUSINE DRIVERS

Hackney and limousine drivers must not charge more than the agreed fare and must give the customer a written receipt with specific trip information, if requested.

UNREASONABLE REFUSAL OF SERVICE

Taxi drivers must not refuse short trips of 30 km or less without a good reason.

This means a driver must sometimes accept short journeys, even if it is just a few minutes away.

SPSV CUSTOMER SERVICE

SPSV operators should:

Be polite, helpful, clean and neatly dressed.	Know the main roads and locations.	Follow the route or directions given by the passenger.	Offer reasonable help with luggage if needed.	Keep their vehicle clean and in good condition.
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RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. At a taxi rank, customers can choose to travel in any taxi in line, not just the one at the front.
2. SPSV drivers must display their ID card and the In-Vehicle Information Card where the customer can easily see them.
3. Taxi drivers cannot say “cash only”. They must offer the option to accept cash, card, or digital payments.

GUIDE DOGS, ASSISTANCE DOGS AND MOBILITY AIDS

SPSV drivers must allow guide dogs, assistance dogs, or mobility aids in the vehicle.

There is no extra cost for passengers who need them.

CUSTOMER RESPONSIBILITIES

FARES

A driver may ask for a deposit or proof that the customer can pay the fare.

TAXIS

Customers must pay the full fare shown on the meter or the agreed fare, including booking fees and other allowed extra charges.

HACKNEYS AND LIMOUSINES

Customers must agree on the fare before the journey starts.

BEHAVIOUR

Customers should be polite and behave properly.

They should not damage or make the car dirty. Eating, drinking, or smoking in the vehicle is not allowed.

If a passenger makes the car so dirty that it needs to be taken off the road for cleaning or repairs, they will have to pay a 'soiling charge'.

Customers should follow any reasonable request from the driver, such as asking them not to enter or to leave the vehicle.

SAFETY

Customers must not ask the driver to take more people than the car is allowed to carry (check the tamper-proof licence disc for the limit).

NOTE

Customers may not ask drivers to break any road traffic laws, for example, speeding or not stopping at a red light.

8.4 ASPECTS OF GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

Good customer service starts from the moment the customer is in contact with you and continues until the end of the trip. It includes how you and your vehicle look and how you treat your passengers.

TIP

Your vehicle should always meet the high standards that are required for the Initial Suitability Inspection.

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION

Keep your vehicle clean and in good condition, inside and out, fixing any problems as soon as possible.

Store any personal items away from where customers sit and make sure that important customer information is easy to see inside the car.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

An SPSV driver's clothes and personal presentation is as important as the cleanliness and tidiness of their vehicle. How you look and dress gives passengers a strong first impression of your service.

You should look professional. Your clothes should be clean, neat and comfortable.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN AGREEING TO A HIRE

ADVANCE BOOKINGS

When a booking is made in advance:

- › Agree on how and when the customer will pay.
- › Confirm the destination and the route.
- › Ask if there are any special needs like wheelchair access or extra space. Make sure you know what type of vehicle the customer needs.
- › Decide how you will meet the customer, for example, using a signal or calling them to let them know you have arrived.
- › Plan your route ahead of time.
- › Leave enough time between bookings to avoid being late.

ON-STREET HIRES (TAXI ONLY)

When a customer hires you from the street:

- › Confirm the destination and the route.
- › Ask for advance payment or a deposit, if needed.

TIP

Have enough change in cash ready before you start your shift.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT ROUTE

- › Ask your customer where they want to go or confirm the destination.
- › When possible, take the shortest or quickest route.
- › If the customer chooses a different route than the one you think is best, respect their choice and agree.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER

- › Customers will notice the effort you make. A clean car, a friendly hello and help with luggage all help create a good first impression.
- › It is appropriate to acknowledge your passenger when you start the trip.
- › Older passengers or people with children and buggies will really appreciate any extra help.
- › Always wear your seatbelt while driving. Remind your passengers to do the same, especially for passengers under the age of 17. See *Chapter 10, Staying safe* for more details.



THINGS TO DO WHEN STARTING THE JOURNEY

1

GETTING STARTED

1. Greet the customer.
2. Confirm the destination and route again.
3. Offer reasonable help with bags or luggage.
4. Start the taximeter (for taxis and wheelchair-accessible taxis).
5. Remind everyone to use their seatbelts.
6. Give a general idea of how long the trip will take.

2

COMMUNICATING

- › Some customers may have a disability, which means they could require some additional assistance or time. Not all disabilities are visible, always show patience.
- › You should talk to your passenger about their trip but not every customer wants to chat. Respect their space and right to silence and do not ask personal questions.
- › Stay away from topics that might be considered personal. These may include topics like politics and religion. If you do not agree with something your customers say, change the subject politely.
- › Treat every customer respectfully. Avoid any conversation that could be offensive to anyone.

3

DRIVING

- › Always drive safely and show respect to other road users.
- › When stopping to pick up a passenger, do it legally and avoid blocking other traffic. For example, do not block bus stops so buses can always operate without problems.
- › Driving in busy traffic can be stressful, staying calm helps you drive better and ensures the customer has a comfortable ride. They will also thank you for a more comfortable and relaxing journey.

THINGS TO DO DURING THE JOURNEY

1

GENERAL BEHAVIOUR

- › Do not use any sat-nav or mapping device while driving. If using one, the route should be set before you pull off.
- › Drive safely, smoothly and plan the road ahead.
- › Do not use your mobile phone (even hands-free) during the ride. Your passenger does not want to hear your private phone conversations.
- › Respect a customer's right to silence.
- › If there is any traffic delay or changes in your route, tell the passenger as soon as you can.
- › Adjust the air conditioning, heater, or windows, if requested, to make the passenger comfortable.
- › Do not play the radio or music too loudly.
- › Help with local information or advice if the passenger asks.

THINGS TO DO AT THE END OF THE JOURNEY

1

PAYMENT AND RECEIPT

1. Explain the fare to the customer, including any extras or discounts.
2. Always give the correct change when the customer pays, even if it is a small amount.
3. Give the customer a receipt.
4. Taxi drivers – provide a printed receipt from the taximeter (not handwritten).
5. Hackney and limousine drivers – must provide a written receipt.
6. Offer a business card with your contact details to help secure repeat business.

2

ASSISTING THE CUSTOMER

1. Stop the taximeter once the journey is complete (for taxis and wheelchair accessible taxis).
2. Offer reasonable help with customer luggage or pushchairs when they exit the vehicle.

SUMMARY REMINDER: CUSTOMER SERVICE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Keep your vehicle clean and in good condition and always look professional.
- ☐ Always be polite and provide reasonable help to load and unload luggage.
- ☐ Do not allow another person in the vehicle without the customer's permission.
- ☐ Always drive the customer and their luggage to their chosen destination. Use the customer's preferred route or take the shortest route if no preference is given.
- ☐ Always drive safely and show respect to other road users.

THE ROLE OF DISPATCH OPERATORS

Customers can hire a taxi at a rank or by hailing one on the street. However, it can be better for both the customer and the driver to use a dispatch operator. This gives customers more options and flexibility since they can book a taxi when and where they need it.

Hackneys and limousines must be booked in advance. They cannot pick up passengers from a taxi rank or respond to someone hailing them on the street. Many hackneys and limousines work with dispatch operators.

Dispatch operators play an important role in making sure customers get good service. Some of the benefits they offer include:

- › A 24-hour, 7-day booking service for some operators in city/town areas.
- › A high standard of service, as required by the NTA (National Transport Authority).
- › The ability to understand additional passenger needs ahead of time.
- › The ability to confirm the destination and route.
- › The ability to, when possible, prioritize bookings for people with disabilities with wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- › A procedure for handling any customer complaints or issues.

NOTE

Dispatch operators must be licensed by NTA. See *Appendix C, Dispatch operator licensing*. Drivers who want to join or work with a dispatch operator should make sure the operator is properly licensed. You can find a list of licensed dispatch operators on the NTA's website: www.nationaltransport.ie.

TWO-WAY RADIOS

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) licenses two-way radios. It is illegal to use a two-way radio without a proper licence. For more information, visit www.comreg.ie.

8.5 ASSISTING CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF DISABILITY

Many passengers with disabilities often use SPSVs. There are different types of disabilities that can make it harder to travel. Knowing about these disabilities helps you provide better assistance.

Types of disabilities include:



Physical disabilities that make it hard for a person to move.



Sensory disabilities that affect communication, such as problems with sight, hearing, or speech.



Learning disabilities that make it harder for a person to learn or understand information.



Mental health problems that affect a person's behaviour.



Hidden disabilities, like arthritis, diabetes, or epilepsy, which may not be visible.

These disabilities can make it difficult for passengers to get into and out of the vehicle, or they may have trouble understanding explanations or what others are saying. Being aware and kind to your passengers can help them feel more comfortable and safer.

HOW TO GIVE SAFE AND APPROPRIATE HELP

Not all customers with disabilities need or want help. The most important thing is to have a respectful attitude toward them. Treat them as you would want to be treated and if you are unsure, ask them how you can help.

- 1 Listen carefully to what your customers say and always give them a choice when offering help. For example, not all wheelchair users will want you to touch their chair. Always ask first, they will be able to tell you what they need.

- 2 Make sure any equipment in your vehicle, like steps or ramps, is in good working condition. When using equipment, explain what you are doing and involve the customer.
- 3 Take your time and be patient. Allow extra time for getting in and out of the vehicle and for discussing the destination.

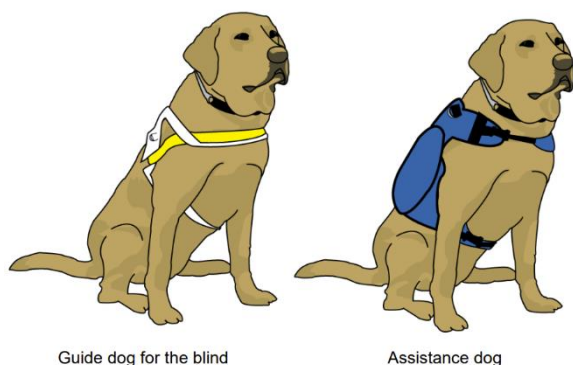
The National Disability Authority has suggestions on how to help customers with disabilities have a more comfortable journey. This is covered in the following section.

TIP

For customers who are deaf or hard of hearing, have a pen and paper ready to write down and confirm the destination.

GUIDE DOGS AND ASSISTANCE DOGS

Customers with guide dogs or assistance dogs can bring their dogs along in the SPSV vehicle free of charge. Let the dog owner direct their dog.



All guide dogs for the blind wear a harness with a white and yellow reflective strip (older harnesses may have an orange strip).

Assistance dogs (for families of children with autism) wear a blue harness.

Guide dog and assistance dog owners may carry an ID card with their name and their dog's name on it.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE NATIONAL DISABILITY AUTHORITY

- ✓ Speak clearly – do not shout or raise your voice unless the customer asks you to.
- ✓ Confirm the drop-off point – if you have trouble understanding the customer or if they have trouble understanding you, write down the destination and ask them to confirm it.
- ✓ Ask if they need help – never assume someone needs help. Always give them a choice and follow their requests.
- ✓ Involve the customer – when using equipment, like a wheelchair restraint. Explain what you are doing and involve the customer.
- ✓ Do not touch or remove aids without permission – do not touch items like walking sticks, wheelchairs, crutches or other aids unless you are helping the customer and have asked permission to do so first.
- ✓ Help with seatbelts – if the customer asks for help tying their seatbelt, assist them.
- ✓ Drive carefully – be extra careful when using ramps, driving over bumps and when turning or braking. Always drive smoothly and at the most suitable speed for the situation.
- ✓ Ask for permission to help with payment – if the customer asks for help paying the fare, ask permission to remove money from their wallet or purse. Always do this in full view of the customer and explain what you are doing. After, return their wallet or purse exactly where it was.



HOW TO ASSIST CUSTOMERS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISION IMPAIRED

When you pick up a passenger who is blind or vision impaired:

Do not use the horn

If picking up a pre-booked customer, do not sound your horn. Instead, arrange a different signal beforehand with the customer. For example, you could arrange to do something like give them two rings on their phone when you arrive and help them to the vehicle.

Introduce yourself

Say your name and use the customer's name if you know it.

Talk directly to them	Always look at and speak directly to the customer, not to their companion or interpreter.
Ask how you can help	If a customer needs help, let them take your arm just above the elbow. Let them set the walking speed and never grab them.
Warn about obstacles	Tell customers about things like steps or low areas of the car door or roof that they could bump into.
Guide them to a landmark	When you stop guiding, direct them to something like a bench or wall so they know where they are. Never just leave them standing in the open. Explain exactly where they have been dropped off.
Respect guide dogs	Do not try to touch or handle a guide dog unless the owner asks. Guide dogs are working animals, so never distract them by playing, petting or feeding them. Allow customers to keep the dog, sitting at their feet, if they wish.
Drive smoothly	Keep your driving gentle to make the ride more comfortable for your passenger.
Give extra time for payment	It may take a passenger with vision impairments longer to find their fare, so be patient.

HOW TO ASSIST CUSTOMERS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

- › Get their attention – tap the customer gently on the arm or shoulder. If possible, approach from the front.
- › Speak clearly – do not shout unless they ask you to. Speak slowly and clearly.
- › Support lip-reading – face the customer when talking, so they can read your lips if needed. Use a mix of speaking and gestures to communicate. It is important to keep your face turned towards customers who are lip-reading.

HOW TO ASSIST CUSTOMERS WHO USE AN INTERPRETER

LOOK AT THE CUSTOMER	BE PATIENT	BE CONSIDERATE
<p>Even if the customer speaks through an interpreter, always address the customer directly, not the interpreter.</p>	<p>If the customer looks at the interpreter instead of you, that is okay. If you do not understand, be direct and say so – Do not be afraid to admit it.</p>	<p>Avoid stopping suddenly, as it can surprise customers who cannot hear. You can use the vehicle's internal lights to get their attention. Point to the destinations and the taximeter to show the fare.</p>

HOW TO HELP CUSTOMERS WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY SPEAKING OR COMMUNICATING

When talking to customers who have difficulty speaking or communicating:

- › Pay attention – Give the customer your full attention and speak clearly.
- › Be patient – Wait for the customer to finish what they are saying. If you do not understand, tell them.
- › Look for other ways to communicate – Some customers may use a communication aid. Look for instructions and take time to read them.
- › Ask yes or no questions – Ask them how they respond to yes and no questions and how they point out objects. Once you understand, ask them simple yes/no questions and wait for their answer.

HOW TO ASSIST CUSTOMERS WITH REDUCED MOBILITY OR WALKING CHALLENGES



People with reduced mobility may find it difficult to walk or stand for long periods. They can also have difficulty using steps, bending, stretching or carrying heavy objects.

Their reduced mobility may be caused by a hidden disability – for example, a heart condition, breathing difficulties or painful joints due to arthritis or some other medical condition.

You can help by doing the following:

SUPPORT WITH ENTRY AND EXIT

Offer your arm to help customers get in and out of the vehicle but never grab them. Always be patient.

DRIVE CAREFULLY

Be extra cautious over speed bumps and potholes, as sudden impacts may cause pain to customers with mobility issues.

BE PATIENT WITH PAYMENT

Some customers may need more time to pay if they have decreased body or hand coordination.



TRAIN FOR AWARENESS

NTA encourages SPSV drivers to complete a recognised disability awareness training. This type of training is currently mandatory in some situations (such as obtaining a wheelchair accessible vehicle grant). This type of training may become mandatory for everyone in the future.

HOW TO HELP CUSTOMERS TRAVELING IN WHEELCHAIRS

When a customer with a wheelchair is entering your wheelchair accessible vehicle you must:



Ask before helping - Do not assume that a customer in a wheelchair needs help but ask if they do.



Use the ramp correctly - Always use the ramp for wheelchair access and position it properly.



Get to their level for eye contact - When talking to a customer in a wheelchair, sit, kneel, or bend down to their level.

Wheelchair users



- **Motorised** - Ask if they want to drive up the ramp themselves.
- **Manual** - Check if customers need help as they go up the ramp.



Position the wheelchair properly - The wheelchair should face either forward or backward inside the vehicle, never sideways.



Secure the wheelchair - Connect the restraints to the wheelchair and the passenger correctly and comfortably.



Ask the customer to apply the brakes - Ensure the wheelchair's brakes are applied before driving.

When a customer is leaving your wheelchair accessible vehicle, make sure the ramp is positioned correctly. The wheelchair should be positioned on the ramp with accuracy to ensure a safe exit.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLE LICENCE HOLDERS



To make accessible services more available, the licence and renewal fees for wheelchair accessible taxis and hackneys are lower than those for other SPSVs. However, NTA requires holders of these licences to offer proper services to people with disabilities.

FURTHER INFORMATION

It is a rule that wheelchair accessible vehicle licences are recorded on the NTA's register. This register helps passengers who need a wheelchair accessible vehicle find the right service. The NTA also shares this information through the SPSV Information Line (0818 064 000).

For the purposes of this register, NTA requires all wheelchair accessible vehicle licence holders to:

- › **Provide contact details** – Give the NTA either your booking contact information, or that of your dispatch operator. Also give information about the area you cover and the service times.
- › **Record booking details** – Keep a record of bookings, including the date, time, contact details of the person who booked, the destination and the arrival time.
- › **Prioritise disability bookings** – Give priority to bookings for people with disabilities.

NOTE

NTA will investigate complaints where people with disabilities are refused service.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- › Disability awareness training – You can find more about training courses from the Irish Wheelchair Association: www.iwa.ie.
- › Irish sign language courses – Courses are available at the Irish Sign Language Academy: www.deaf.ie.
- › National Council for the Blind in Ireland (NCBI) - Offers disability awareness training under the Services for Organisations link: www.ncbi.ie.
- › Best practices – Read the National Disability Authority’s guide, Towards Best Practice in Provision of Transport Services for People with Disabilities in Ireland: www.nda.ie.

8.6 DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY



EQUALITY LEGISLATION AND THE SPSV OPERATOR

As an SPSV operator, you have the right to be treated equally and with respect. You also have the responsibility to treat all your customers equally and with respect. Treating customers well will make their journeys more pleasant and acting in a professional manner will help improve your reputation, which can lead to more business.

The Equal Status Acts 2000 - 2011 apply to all providers of goods and services. These laws promote equality and fairness, and they prohibit certain types of discrimination based on nine specific grounds:

GROUND FOR DISCRIMINATION

The Equal Status Acts 2000–2011 protect you and your customers from discrimination. It is illegal to treat someone unfairly based on the following grounds:

								
Gender	Marital status	Family status	Age	Religion	Disability	Race	Sexual orientation	Membership of the Traveller community

The law also bans bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment) and victimisation. You must also do what you can to accommodate customers with disabilities.

This means offering special help or services when needed, so that people with disabilities can use your service without extra difficulty.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission website at www.ihrec.ie.

YOUR RIGHT TO EQUAL AND FAIR TREATMENT

You have the right to refuse service to or ask a customer to leave your vehicle if they discriminate against you, harass you, based on any of the nine grounds mentioned above, or behave in a disorderly or offensive way.

It is your right to expect customers to behave in a civil and polite manner and follow any reasonable request you make, including leaving the vehicle if necessary.

1	You have the right to refuse any passenger who is being disorderly or offensive.
2	It is also your right to ask a customer to leave if they are behaving inappropriately.
3	Customers must behave properly and follow any reasonable requests you make, including leaving the vehicle if asked.
4	If someone treats you unfairly or harasses you because of your nationality, gender, race, disability, etc., you can ask them to leave or refuse to take them at all.
5	Racist incidents or harassment can be reported to the Gardaí.

YOUR CUSTOMER'S RIGHT TO EQUAL AND FAIR TREATMENT

You must treat all your customers with respect. Any behaviour that could be seen as intimidating, racially prejudiced, or harassment breaks this rule.

Remember that our thoughts can be personal or subjective – a comment that you believe to be harmless might be seen by others as offensive.

Be aware of customers with special needs, like older people or those with disabilities. They might not always be able to speak up for themselves.

TIP

What you find funny or interesting might not be funny to others, especially people from different cultural backgrounds or age groups.

OPERATING AN SPSV IN A DIVERSE IRELAND

As an SPSV operator, you will meet people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Some of your customers might be new to Ireland, or you might be meeting a tourist or someone who has recently arrived from another country. In any case, the best practice includes giving excellent service to customers from all backgrounds, cultures and countries.

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS



Customers who do not speak English can feel frustrated if they cannot tell you where they want to go or what they need. Be patient and speak slowly and clearly.

NOTE

If you are not sure about the destination, write it down or use maps and diagrams to confirm. It can also help to keep a few illustrated tourist maps in your vehicle for reference.

Use short and simple sentences, pausing after each point. Avoid shouting or exaggerating your tone because it will not help them understand better.

WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE

It is best to avoid using too much slang or local expressions, like “How’s the craic?” or “We could cut through the Park”, because these might be confusing to someone from outside Ireland.

TIME TO LISTEN

If your customer finds English difficult, listen carefully and do not interrupt unless you need to ask a question. If you do not understand, it is better to ask them to repeat themselves rather than pretending you understand. Your main job is to get them to the right destination.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE IRISH HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUALITY COMMISSION

- ✓ Be careful about what you display in your vehicle. Racist pictures, signs, or slogans are illegal. What you think is funny might be inappropriate to others.
- ✓ Always treat passengers with respect and professionalism.
- ✓ Do not make negative comments or jokes about someone's appearance, behaviour, race, or disability.
- ✓ Respect customer privacy. Do not ask personal questions unless the customer shares that information first. You also have a right to privacy and are not required to answer any questions you feel are too private.
- ✓ Do not act aggressively or speak in an angry way.
- ✓ Avoid sexual harassment. Do not make offensive jokes, ask about a customer's private life, or touch someone unnecessarily or inappropriately.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more details about equality laws, visit the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission website at www.ihrec.ie.

NTA works with the Immigrant Council of Ireland to help fight racism. The Immigrant Council of Ireland provides a range of support to people who have experienced or witnessed racism. See www.immigrantcouncil.ie.

8.7 DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS



Most customers are happy with their taxi, hackney, or limousine journeys. However, on occasion, they may have issues, such as a problem with the service, vehicle condition, overcharging, or being refused service. In these cases, customers can file a complaint.

COMPLAINTS FOR NTA

NTA handles complaints for the following:

- › The condition, roadworthiness and cleanliness of a vehicle.
- › Complaints about a driver's conduct, behaviour or identification.
- › Complaints about overcharging, fare issues or failure to issue a receipt.
- › Any SPSV booking or hiring problems.
- › Complaints about SPSV vehicle identification, appearance, logos and advertisements.

NOTE

If the NTA receives three or more complaints about a driver's knowledge of the area, they may require the driver to take and pass the Area Knowledge Test before renewing their licence.

The NTA will investigate the complaint and may decide to take no further action, give advice to the driver, issue a reprimand, caution, formal warning, or proceed to prosecution.

COMPLAINTS FOR OTHER AGENCIES

Other agencies handle different types of complaints.



AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA

For road legislation violations or criminal matters.

OFFICE OF TOBACCO CONTROL

For smoking violations.

WHAT CAN CUSTOMERS DO?

Customers who wish to complain can do so online at www.transportforireland.ie.

If the customer made a booking through a dispatch operator, they should first contact the dispatch operator with their complaint.

To ensure a complaint is properly addressed, it is important that the customer provides at least one of the following details:

- › The driver's name.
- › The SPSV driver licence number.
- › The vehicle licence number or vehicle registration number.

TIP

Customers can check driver and vehicle license details using the free Driver Check app, available for download from Apple and Android app stores.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

It is important to keep a detailed record of any events that could lead to complaints. This way, you can check your notes later if questioned.

FURTHER INFORMATION

You can visit NTA's consumer website at www.transportforireland.ie for information on how to make a complaint about SPSV services.

8.8 DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

Some customers may be impatient, rude, demanding, or upset. It is important to remain calm and professional in these situations.

NOTE

If a customer asks you to carry more passengers than allowed by law (as indicated on your vehicle's tamper-proof licence discs), kindly explain that it is against the law. Suggest they use two vehicles if necessary. If they insist, calmly refuse and drive away safely.

Similarly, if customers ask you to break other regulations, such as exceeding the speed limit or parking illegally, explain that you cannot agree to such requests and, if needed, ask them to leave the vehicle.

While you cannot control someone else's behaviour, your actions may influence theirs. Here are a few tips for managing such situations:

INTERACT AND COMMUNICATE

Greet your customers warmly at the start of the journey and maintain a friendly attitude.

It is harder for customers to be rude or unpleasant if you are being friendly.

STAY CALM AND CONTROLLED

If a customer becomes upset, avoid raising your voice or arguing.

Stay calm, speak clearly. This might help the customer stay calm as well.

LISTEN

Let the customer express their concerns fully and listen attentively. Show empathy by acknowledging their feelings, so they know you understand what has upset them.

Aim to fix the issue in a peaceful and professional manner.

SHARE THE PROBLEM

If the situation does not improve and the customer remains dissatisfied, let them know they can file a complaint with NTA.

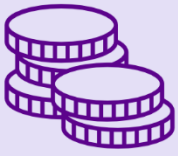
Give them the SPSV Information Line number (0818 064 000) and provide your driver and vehicle licence number to ensure their complaint is properly recorded.

8.9 LOST PROPERTY

An Garda Síochána is responsible for lost property handed in by SPSV drivers. If a driver finds a lost item and cannot return it to the passenger, they should hand it over to their local Garda station.

Dublin SPSV services should drop any lost property at one of these designated Garda stations:

Store Street: (01) 6668000	Irishtown: (01) 6669600	Finglas: (01) 6667500
Shankill: (01) 6665900	Tallaght: (01) 6666000	



CHAPTER 9: YOUR SPSV BUSINESS

9

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter deals with what you need to know when you are operating an SPSV business.

- › Working in the SPSV industry
- › Choosing the right business model
- › Creating a business plan
- › Running your own business
- › Promoting your business

9.1 WORKING IN THE SPSV INDUSTRY

There are many ways to work within the SPSV industry, with different roles, responsibilities and opportunities. Here is an overview:

AS A DRIVER



You can obtain an SPSV driver licence and drive a licensed vehicle that you own or one owned by someone else. You must inform NTA as to which vehicle you are driving. *See Chapter 5, Working as an SPSV operator.*

If you already hold a local area hackney (vehicle) licence, you can get a local area hackney driver licence and provide hackney services but only within the area for which it is licensed.

AS A VEHICLE OWNER

You can get a vehicle licence, which allows you to either drive the vehicle yourself (if you have an SPSV driver licence) or let another licensed driver operate the vehicle.

NOTE

If you rent out your vehicle to another driver, you must inform NTA – see *Chapter 5, Working as an SPSV operator.*

The vehicle licence specifies what type of SPSV vehicle it can be (e.g., taxi, wheelchair accessible taxi, hackney, wheelchair accessible hackney, local area hackney, or limousine).

AS A DISPATCH OPERATOR

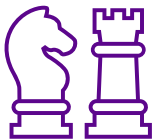
This role involves coordinating the logistics of SPSV services.

You can obtain an SPSV dispatch operator licence to take bookings for SPSV services. *See Appendix C, Dispatch operator licensing.* This can be by a few methods including phone, online or via a system you have set up for taking bookings and arranging services with drivers you have agreements with.

A COMBINATION OF THE ABOVE ROLES

With the appropriate licences in the SPSV industry, you can hold multiple roles like the above. For example, you can be both a driver and a vehicle owner, or a vehicle owner and a dispatch operator.

9.2 CHOOSING THE RIGHT BUSINESS MODEL



When you start a new SPSV business or want to grow an existing one, one of the most important and biggest decisions you must make is whether to work as a sole trader or set up a private limited company. Each of these business types has good and bad points.

You should talk to an independent expert before you choose the best option for you. They also have different costs and ways to make money. It is important to investigate all the options carefully. You should choose what suits you best and what can give you a good return for your time, money and effort.

Planning early will also help you avoid problems later.

SOLE TRADER BUSINESS MODEL

A sole trader is an individual who operates a business on their own without partners or a separate legal entity. The sole trader is personally responsible for all aspects of the business, including profits, loss and liabilities.

This chapter mainly talks about the issues, opportunities and problems that an SPSV owner or driver might deal with when working as a sole trader. Most people in this industry choose this model. However, many of the points here are useful for other business types too.

The SPSV Driver Entry Test may have some questions about running a business. However, NTA does not give personal business advice. To get the best help, you should talk to an accountant or another trained expert. They can guide you in setting up and managing your business the right way.

TAX AND COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

To obtain or renew any SPSV licence, whether for a vehicle, driver, or dispatch operator, you must prove that your tax affairs are up to date with Revenue.

NTA's involvement in your business is not just about tax compliance. NTA encourages all the SPSV operators to run their business efficiently and professionally. This helps SPSVs to build a strong business that provides a great service to the travelling public.

PLANNING TO BECOME AN SPSV OPERATOR

Before you decide to work in the SPSV industry, there are some important things you need to think about. These same issues also come up if you already work in the industry and want to make changes or grow your business.

Here are some things to consider.

TIP

Sometimes, NTA might temporarily limit the issuing of new licences for one or more types of SPSV. This is done to improve the services for the public. If this happens, NTA will post the details on its website and share the news during the licence application process.

Carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of working in this industry.

Get as much information and advice as you can. Then decide if working in the SPSV industry is the right choice for you.

If you are well informed and prepared, you will have a much better chance of building and running a successful business.

Prepare well financially if you plan to apply for a bank loan or credit.

Your bank manager will want to see that you have thought carefully about your decision and that you have made a full and realistic business plan.

Choose what kind of SPSV you want to operate.

All of them can work 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

9.3 CREATING A BUSINESS PLAN

Writing a business plan is a great way to be clear about why you want to start an SPSV business and what you hope to achieve. A business plan will help you plan your work and money and check how your business is doing later.

If you need a loan or overdraft from the bank, your bank manager may ask for a business plan.

Writing a business plan can be simple, you just need to answer some important questions, like the ones below:

WHAT IS THE OVERALL PLAN FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

- › What is your background and your work experience?
- › What is your overall plan for your business?
- › How do you want it to develop?
- › What type of SPSV operation will you have?
- › Will you drive and ply for hire, or also run a dispatch service or a booking app?
- › Look around your area. Are there lots of hotels, restaurants, shopping centres, transport stations, or big businesses? If yes, these places might bring you a lot of customers.
- › Will you own your own vehicle or rent a vehicle from another licence holder? See *Chapter 4, Vehicle licensing* for more information on renting a vehicle.

HAVE YOU DONE ANY MARKET RESEARCH?



Before you start, it is very important to research and identify your market.

Find out how many people will need your service in the area where you want to work and how many other drivers are already offering services there.

- › Who are your customers and where can you find them?
- › How will you attract customers and promote your services?
- › How will your customers find you?

- › Are your target customers city shoppers, workers, people who need wheelchair services, people who use transport hubs (airports, train stations), business clients, or late-night customers?
- › Is there anything that makes you different from other drivers offering the same services? This could be having a luxury car, an eight-seater, a wheelchair accessible car, or offering discounts for regular bookings.
- › Is your area already full of SPSVs or other public transport? If yes, it will be harder to find customers.
- › What are your busiest areas and times? Can you create more opportunities and build on them?
- › What do different types of customers want? Think about late-night club and partygoers, businesspeople, etc. Will you cater for tourists, festival goers and hospital appointments?

NOTE

It is not enough to just spot good opportunities. You must also carefully and realistically figure out how much business you really expect to get.

You should visit the places where you think you might find customers. Visit at different times of the day and night.

Talk to people who could be your customers and to people who work near them, like business managers so you can find out:

- › What they need
- › How well their needs are being currently met
- › What kind of services you could offer to meet their needs

You should also find out how much competition you will face. If you already have your SPSV driver licence, you could rent a licensed vehicle for a short time. This can help you learn about demand in your area and find the best times to work. See *Chapter 5, Working as an SPSV operator*.

WHICH VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS APPLY TO YOU?

- › What type of vehicle do you need and how much will it cost?
- › Will you drive a taxi, hackney, or limousine?
- › Do you need a standard or wheelchair accessible vehicle?

TIP

Offer a fully accessible service for people who need it. You can also check the local directory for hospitals, medical centres, or nursing homes. These places might have contract work available.

NOTE

It may be more expensive to run and maintain an SPSV than a private vehicle. See *Chapter 3, Choosing a vehicle to use as an SPSV* for requirements.

HOW WILL FARES WORK?

- › How many customers do you expect to have during each shift?
- › How many shifts will you work and how much do you expect to earn from each trip?
- › What is the cost of each fare?

The SPSV business can still be a cash business, although electronic payments are now required for some licences. You need to be careful about what you do with your fare money.

WHAT FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS ARE THERE?

Before you start your SPSV business, you need to check if it can make enough money to succeed and your operating profit exceeds your business costs.

- › Do you have start-up finance or are you able to raise enough to start your business?

- › Can you generate enough income to live on or run a business that earns more money than it spends?
- › Will you own your own vehicle or rent a vehicle from another licence holder? See *Chapter 4, Vehicle licensing* for more information on renting a vehicle.

Create a financial plan that is as complete and accurate as you can make it. Don't worry — it is not as hard as it sounds.

NTA generally reviews the Taxi Cost Index about every two years. This index shows helpful operating costs and business information and can help you when planning your finances.

Once you know your expected costs, you can work out how much money you need to earn every week or month to cover them. This will also help you see when you might have bigger bills coming up, so you can plan ahead. You will then know if you might need a loan or overdraft to help you through busy or expensive times.

NOTE

First, make a list of all the costs you think you will have. Then, figure out when each cost will happen.

It helps to group the costs by how often they happen, for example, every week, every month, or once a year.

PROJECTED EXPENDITURE FOR TYPICAL SPSV OPERATOR

START-UP COSTS

- › The purchase of the vehicle. See *Chapter 3, Choosing a vehicle to use as an SPSV* and *Chapter 4, Vehicle licensing* for conditions.
- › The initial vehicle licence fee and Initial Suitability Inspection fee.
- › The purchase of a roof sign, branding, taximeter, printer and cashless payment facility (taxi only).
- › The calibration and verification of a taximeter (taxi only).
- › The fee for the SPSV Driver Entry Test and SPSV driver licence fee.
- › The costs for safety equipment.

FREQUENT EXPENSES

- › The cost of fuel, cleaning/valeting and servicing for a vehicle.
- › Costs for advertising and promotion, for example, local papers, business cards, flyers etc.
- › The cost of loan repayments.
- › Costs for radio rental/affiliation to a dispatch operator.

OCCASIONAL EXPENSES

- › Costs for SPSV equipment including pen and paper, receipt rolls and replacement safety equipment, for example, fire extinguishers, first-aid kits, etc.
- › The purchase of spare parts/replacement tyres for a vehicle.
- › The recalibration and re-verification of a taximeter whenever the National Maximum Taxi Fare changes or a vehicle is changed.

YEARLY COSTS

- › The annual Licence Renewal Assessment fee and NCT test fee.
- › The cost of insurance to cover the use of the vehicle as an SPSV. Some insurance companies facilitate payment over ten or twelve months.
- › The required road tax paid half-yearly or quarterly, and airport permit charges if applicable.

EVERY FIVE YEARS

The SPSV driver licence renewal fee.

LESS FREQUENT COSTS

Decide how often your vehicle will need to be replaced. This will depend largely on the age, mileage and condition of the car. Remember that age and size restrictions apply. See *Chapter 3, Chapter 4* and *Appendix A, Vehicle age rules*.

UNPREDICTABLE COSTS

You need to set up a backup fund or amount to deal with unexpected costs, like unplanned repairs.

SEEK PROFESSIONAL FINANCIAL ADVICE

You do not have to hire an accountant, but it can make running your business much easier when it comes to tax compliance and other aspects of financial management. It makes good business sense to think about hiring an accountant because:

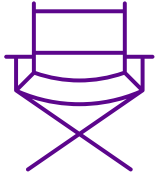
- › They know how the tax system works.
- › They understand your rights and what you are entitled to in relation to tax credits and reliefs.
- › They can sometimes save you more money in tax than they charge you in fees.

REMEMBER TO PLAN FOR FINANCIAL SECURITY

An accountant can only help if you give them good records. The better your records are, the easier it is for them to prepare your tax returns and give advice.

While Revenue does not always require audited accounts, many banks and lenders do. If you do not have audited accounts, it may be harder to get a loan in the future.

9.4 RUNNING YOUR OWN BUSINESS



Most people working in the SPSV industry are self-employed. This gives you the freedom to decide when and how much you want to work. However, it also means you have legal responsibilities about how you run your business.

Being your own boss can be a challenge. It requires discipline and determination. But running your own business also gives you more control over your working life and can be a rewarding and fulfilling experience.

Learning the basics of running a small business, explained here and on the next pages, will help you make more money and enjoy the freedom of self-employment.

KEEP GOOD BUSINESS RECORDS

Everyone in business must keep records, especially records of income and expenses.

Good records will help you:

- › Manage your business.
- › Make and submit accurate tax returns.
- › Deal with and meet licensing and other requirements of the NTA.
- › A professional accountant can advise you on what records you need to meet legal tax requirements.
- › Because an SPSV business can be cash-based and have electronic payments, keeping records can vary, but should be quite simple.
- › Use a manual or electronic diary to record the daily and weekly total of all fares you receive.
- › Keep a record of all business expenses, such as fuel, vehicle maintenance and accessories.
- › Save all your receipts. An easy way to do this is to staple the receipts onto the relevant page in your diary.

KEEP A DIARY



As a first step towards keeping good records, use a simple diary to note down income and expenditure. Do it every day – otherwise you will forget.

You should also use your diary to keep track of important dates for your licences. Without valid licences, you are not allowed to work.

An online diary is also very useful for recording incidents that might later be investigated by An Garda Síochána or by NTA. A diary entry made at the time is much stronger evidence than relying on a verbal account or your memory later in court.

Divide the page in two: on the left, note all your fares; and on the right, note all your expenses, particularly fuel. See the diary example below.

<p><i>25 July 20XX</i></p> <p><i>7.2 – Drumcondra – Airport 19</i></p> <p><i>8.00 Clonsillaugh – Wilton Place 18</i></p> <p><i>9.00 Green – Landsdown 7</i></p> <p><i>9.40 Connolly Stn. – Phibsborough</i></p>	<p><i>Expenses (receipts attached)</i></p> <p><i>Petrol, Raheny 40</i></p> <p><i>Puncture repair, Ringsend 10</i></p> <p><i>Car wash Naas 6</i></p>
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RECORDING AND DOCUMENTING YOUR DAY

Good records help you stay tax-compliant and plan your work better. For example, records can show you the best places and times to find customers.

Keeping records is also important for longer-term financial planning. If you want to apply for a bank loan, you will probably need to show your records.

There are mobile phone apps and other devices that can help you keep good records. Some apps track where you were and when, while others keep detailed logs of your journeys. Taxi drivers should also know that their taximeter may record detailed information about their trips.

Using accounting software or apps can help you manage your money and make financial reports easily.

IMPORTANT DATES TO DIARISE

RENEWAL DATES

- › Your SPSV driver licence. Apply at least six weeks before it expires.
- › Your insurance policy. Driving without insurance is a criminal offence.

EXPIRY DATES

- › Your motor tax disc. It is illegal to drive an untaxed vehicle.
- › Your standard driving licence.
- › Your NCT test certificate.
- › Your vehicle licence. You can renew it up to 60 days before it expires.

NOTE

Renewing licences often involves delays. Start the process early to avoid the risk of losing your licence, income, or penalties. For example, tax or NCT updates can take 48 hours to show in the NTA system and changing insurance details might take a week for new documents to arrive.

NOTE

The collection and storage of personal information is controlled by the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information, visit the Data Protection Commissioner's website at www.dataprotection.ie. If you collect personal customer information, you cannot share it with anyone else and you must use it only for the reason it was collected.

9.5 PROMOTING YOUR BUSINESS



Whatever type of SPSV business you decide to create - vehicle operator, driver, or dispatch operator - you will need to plan how to promote your service. This is usually called marketing.

Doing market research before you start is important, but marketing must also continue after your business is up and running. When you are running a business, it is easy to focus only on day-to-day activities like driving customers from one place to

another. However, if you want your business to succeed in the long term and to secure your future, you must also spend time promoting, advertising and marketing it.

ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

Look at how others advertise and promote their services. Think about how effective they are and how you might do even better. The way you advertise will depend on the type of SPSV service you offer.

Here are some common ways to advertise and promote your business:

One of the best forms of advertising is a satisfied customer. A happy customer will recommend you to others at no cost to you.	Advertising through newspapers, shops, notice boards and local radio stations.	Partnering with local businesses, such as hotels, who can recommend your service to their customers - for example, for airport pick-ups and drop-offs.
Handing out business cards or printing your contact details on receipts to encourage customers to call you again.	Using online marketing strategies like search engine optimisation (SEO), email marketing, and pay-per-click advertising.	Giving out flyers and leaflets to homes, businesses and places where your customers are, including special promotions for events like weddings or school prom or deb.
Supporting or sponsoring local events and charities, which can raise your profile in the community.	Joining a local business network, which can help you make useful contacts.	Telling everyone you know about your business and asking them to support you and spread the word.
Creating an online presence with a website and social media accounts lets you reach more people, show off your services, display your rates and share your contact information. It also gives customers a way to contact you with special requests.		
If you drive a taxi, advertising on your vehicle can promote your own business and could even bring in extra money if other businesses pay to advertise. Hackneys and limousines are not allowed to advertise this way.		

BUILDING BUSINESS WITH EXISTING CUSTOMERS

Excellent customer satisfaction is an important part of your brand. See *Chapter 8, Delivering customer satisfaction*. It is important to think about how to build a group of customers who will call you first when they need an SPSV ride.

If you always meet their needs and never let them down, they are more likely to stay loyal to you. This is especially true if you offer wheelchair accessible services.

1

One of the first steps to building a regular customer list is to encourage passengers to book you again when they need a collection from home or work. Always give customers a business card, share your website, ask them to follow you on your social media account, or make sure your contact details are printed on their receipt.

2

Remind your passengers that the taxi fare calculated on the taximeter is for the journey, and, apart from a small extra passenger charge, it does not depend on how many people are travelling. For example, if four people travel together in a taxi, the fare per person may be less than what they would pay for a bus or train ticket.

3

If customers are happy with your service, ask them to recommend you to their friends and colleagues. This helps spread the word about your business and grow your number of customers.

NOTE

By law, only taxis and wheelchair accessible taxis are allowed to use the word “taxi” in advertising. It is not allowed to use advertising materials that promote unlicensed vehicles.



SUMMARY ADVICE

- › Plan your shifts around busy routes and locations.
- › With a little planning, you can be in the right place at the right time. Local newspapers and websites often list theatre times, concert events, sports matches, landmarks and airports.
- › Driving people regularly to and from places like a supermarket can be a big part of your business. Build relationships with people in your local or residential area and encourage repeat business.
- › Today, customers expect the service to come to them. Many people prefer to book taxis online or through an app, rather than going to a taxi rank.
- › Set up your online presence, websites and social media accounts to engage and be found by the public.
- › By understanding who your main customers are likely to be, you can better decide which methods to use to attract them.



REMAINING TAX COMPLIANT

As a self-employed person, you must register for tax with the Revenue Commissioners. You must also pay the tax owed on your income every year by 31 October.

You must tell Revenue about all your income, no matter where it comes from.

NTA requires you to always have tax clearance if you want to keep your SPSV driver or vehicle licence. At certain times, NTA may also share information with Revenue, the Department of Social Protection and other government bodies to enforce the law.

HOW TO REGISTER FOR TAX

When you start your business, you must fill in a registration form to register for tax. You need a PPSN to do this.

If you are Irish, you will most likely already have a PPSN. If not, you can get one by registering with the Department of Social Protection.

HOW TO PAY INCOME TAX

SELF-ASSESSMENT

As a self-employed sole trader, you must pay your taxes through the self-assessment system.

- ✓ Report your income every year. Your sales income minus your business costs.
- ✓ Pay the correct amount of tax.
- ✓ Keep all your records and include some information from them in your tax return documents. You do not have to send full yearly accounts to Revenue, but you must keep them available.
- ✓ Know that your accounts can be checked randomly at any time by Revenue for up to six years after you file your tax return documents.

FILING ONLINE

1. Under the My ROS system, on www.revenue.ie, go to My Services.
2. Select File a Return.
3. Choose Form 11. This is the standard return form for self-employed individuals.
4. Complete the form and apply for any available tax credits.

You can also pay any balances due for the previous year and any preliminary tax for the current year.

By 31 October each year, you must:

1. File your tax return for the previous year.
2. Pay any balance of tax you owe for the previous year.
3. Pay your estimated tax, called preliminary tax, for the current year.

To avoid interest charges, your preliminary tax must be 90% or more of your current year's final tax bill, or 100% of the previous year's final tax bill.

Your tax bill includes income tax and self-employed PRSI (Pay Related Social Insurance) and (USC) Universal Social Charge, each of which is calculated as a percentage of your income.

ADDITIONAL TAXES TO ACCOUNT FOR IN FINANCIAL PLANNING

VAT - VALUE ADDED TAX

Passenger transport services are exempt from standard VAT rules. As an SPSV operator you provide a VAT exempt service. This means that you do not charge VAT on the service you provide. However, it also means that you are not entitled to reclaim VAT on any taxable business purchases (for example, your taximeter or roof sign).

MOTOR TAX

If your vehicle is licensed as an SPSV and you use it only for SPSV work, you can get a reduced rate of motor tax.

If you use your SPSV vehicle for other purposes as well, you must pay the full rate of motor tax.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information, contact your local motor tax office.

SEPARATE PERSONAL FROM BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

It is good practice to keep your business and personal finances separate. This makes it much easier to complete your tax returns and see how well your business is doing.

1. Open a business bank account.
 - Put all your business income into this account.
 - Pay all your business expenses from this account.
2. If you need money for yourself or personal expenses, transfer it from your business account into your personal account.

WORKING WITH A DISPATCH OPERATOR



If you are thinking about partnering with or joining a dispatch operator, make sure you understand how they work and that you read and understand their terms and conditions.

Some dispatch operators:

- › Charge a fixed fee for using or renting their radio system.
- › Charge you for each job they give you.
- › Use vehicle tracking technology to help match drivers and customers more efficiently.

TIP

There are also online and mobile app-based services for booking taxis and hackneys. It is a good idea to check their terms and conditions before signing up.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISPATCH OPERATORS

If you intend to set up as a dispatch operator, you will need to obtain a licence. See *Appendix C, Dispatch operator licensing*.

Extra expenses may be involved including, accommodation to use as an office and equipment like telephones and two-way radios to communicate with drivers.

There are other factors to be taken into consideration, relating to finance and accounting, staff employment, legal liability, insurance and health and safety. These are beyond the scope of this Manual. It is recommended to seek professional advice before going ahead.

RESOURCES

Banks produce useful guides to setting up a business. Here are some additional resources and links.

Revenue's website has information about the tax system for businesses and a downloadable guide, Starting a Business. The forms you need to register your business for tax are also downloadable from there. www.revenue.ie

The Department of Social Protection has a guide to setting up a business, Toil and Trouble, downloadable from their website. www.welfare.ie

The Local Enterprise Offices offer information, advice and training to new and existing businesses. www.localenterprise.ie

The Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation has a useful website with links to sites offering information about setting up and running a business. www.djei.ie/enterprise/smes/syob.htm

The Companies Registration Office can provide details on the registration of companies and company names and the requirements for filing accounts. www.cro.ie

The Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association (ISME) is a membership-based organisation supporting and representing small businesses. Its website has a range of information and services. www.isme.ie



CHAPTER 10: STAYING SAFE

10

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter deals with the steps you can take to make your working life safer, more secure and compliant with current health and safety legislation.

- › NTA's role in safety
- › Looking after your own safety and that of your customers
- › Looking after your personal security
- › What to do in a collision or emergency
- › Handling and transporting luggage and other heavy items
- › Complying with regulations

10.1 NTA'S ROLE IN SAFETY

NTA plays a key role in ensuring that SPSV services are professional and safe.

The regulations created by NTA focus on both driver and customer safety and provide guidelines on how to maintain a high standard of service.

NTA outlines specific rights and responsibilities for both SPSV operators and customers to ensure safety and professionalism.

KEY NTA SAFETY REGULATIONS

- ✓ Refusal of service - Drivers have the right to refuse service to disorderly, abusive passengers or those unwilling to pay the fare. Additionally, drivers can refuse passengers carrying items that are unsafe, bulky or too heavy.
- ✓ Compliance with regulations - NTA enforces regulations that ensure both road safety and vehicle safety, including considerations such as driving practices, licensing and vehicle standards.

Although NTA does not enforce regulations that relate to road safety or smoking in the workplace, it is important that you know these regulations and understand the benefits of obeying them, as they directly affect your working life.

In addition to NTA, there are several organisations responsible for creating and enforcing the safety and security regulations that apply to you as an SPSV operator.



AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA

Area of responsibility: Vehicle safety regulations (including mobile phone use while driving), road and traffic legislation and criminal incidents, such as theft, robbery, or assault.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Local Garda stations nationwide www.garda.ie.

ROAD SAFETY AUTHORITY (RSA)

Area of responsibility: Vehicle standards regulations (rules not covered by NTA) and driving standards.

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.rsa.ie and www.rsa.ie/services/learner-drivers/resources/rules-of-the-road.

HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY (HSA)

Area of responsibility: Enforcement of the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005 and associated health and safety legislation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.hsa.ie.

HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE (HSE)

Area of Responsibility: Ensuring compliance with smoke-free workplace legislation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.hse.ie.

Operating in compliance with safety regulations provides important benefits both for you and your customers.

Ensuring a safe and comfortable journey with excellent health and safety standards is an important factor in providing a first-class professional service.

A safer journey means a better experience for the customer, which can increase repeat business and result in a higher income for you.

10.2 LOOKING AFTER YOUR OWN SAFETY AND THAT OF YOUR CUSTOMERS

AVOIDING DRIVER FATIGUE



The RSA says driver fatigue is a factor in about 10-20% of road traffic collisions (Source: <https://www.rsa.ie>). A tired driver is not a safe driver. You should plan your work shifts carefully to make sure you get enough sleep and avoid getting too tired.

Whenever you have a short break, you should:

- › Take a quick rest if possible.
- › Get some fresh air.
- › Stretch your legs.

DRIVING HOURS

When you apply for an SPSV driver licence, you formally agree that you will not drive or use an SPSV for more than 11 hours on any three days in a row.

Example: If you drive or use an SPSV for more than 11 hours on Monday and again on Tuesday, you cannot do the same on Wednesday. You may still drive on Wednesday, but only for less than 11 hours. Also, you must not have worked over 11 hours on the previous Sunday.

SAFER DRIVING



Always drive carefully and think about other people on the road.

Be extra careful around vulnerable road users with less protection, for example, pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. As an SPSV driver, you are on the road a lot more than most people.

Developing good driving habits will help you:

- › Stay safe.
- › Keep your passengers and other road users safe.
- › Protect your personal health and well-being.
- › Save money on running and repair costs.

The RSA says aggressive driving is dangerous, stressful and expensive:

- › Avoid speeding up too quickly or braking suddenly unless you must.
- › Do not use your horn because you are frustrated or angry.
- › Keep to the legal speed limits and leave enough space between you and the car in front of you.

TIP

As a professional driver, you should never react to aggressive road users. Your customers trust you to give them a safe and comfortable trip. If you do, they are more likely to thank you and use your service again.

PENALTY POINTS AND INSURANCE

Poor driving can lead to penalty points.

Penalty points are a bigger problem for SPSV drivers than for regular drivers because they make your insurance more expensive and can result in you losing your licence. If you lose your licence, you lose your employment and income.

You might consider taking an advanced driving course with a driving school. Apart from making you a safer driver, it may also lower your insurance costs. Ask your insurance company or broker for more details.

NOTE

You must take every reasonable step to keep your passengers safe when they are in the car and when they are entering or leaving the vehicle.

Here are some guidelines:

- › Only let passengers leave the vehicle where it is safe to do so.
- › Warn passengers about any dangers, like busy roads or obstacles.
- › Watch out for how exiting passengers might affect other road users, especially cyclists and pedestrians.



MOBILE PHONES

It is against the law to hold a phone in your hand while driving or to support the phone with any part of your body. It is dangerous because it distracts you from the road.

It is also an offence to send or read a text message from your phone while driving. This applies to mobile phones used with hands-free devices.

If the Gardaí charge you with using your mobile while driving, you will get a fixed charge notice of €120.

- › If you pay the fixed charge, you will get **3 penalty points**.
- › If you choose not to pay the fixed charge and are then convicted in court, you will get **5 penalty points** and a fine of up to **€2,000**.

NOTE

Emergency calls to 999 or 112 are the only exception.

Twelve penalty points on your licence results in driver disqualification; however, an even lower threshold of 7 penalty points applies to learner or novice drivers.

Smartphone apps that are used by booking services have the functionality to:

- › Tell you a fare is waiting
- › Allow you to accept a fare by pushing a button
- › Display details of the pick-up location and a map of how to get there

HANDS-FREE EQUIPMENT

Using a hands-free kit with your phone is not illegal, but it is still a distraction. It puts you, your passengers, and others on the road at risk. You could still be prosecuted for dangerous driving, careless driving, or driving without due care and attention.

TIP

Avoid using your phone while driving, even if you have a hands-free system. If you need to use your phone, pull over and park safely and legally before using it.

The RSA recommends the following guidelines while driving:

- › **Never** try to write notes.
- › **Never** look up phone numbers.
- › **Never** have long, complicated, emotional, or stressful conversations.

GPS AND SAT NAV EQUIPMENT

Always set your route before you commence the journey. Do not use equipment while driving.

The RSA in Ireland recommends entering your destination before starting your journey and pulling over to make adjustments, if needed. They also encourage drivers to be aware of their surroundings and the potential distractions of technology. See *Chapter 6, Finding your way around* for more details.

SMOKING



A vehicle taxed as an SPSV is legally considered a place of work. Under the Public Health (Tobacco) (Amendment) Act 2004, smoking is always banned in your vehicle.

This means:

- › You cannot smoke in your SPSV vehicle at any time.
- › Passengers cannot smoke in your SPSV vehicle, even if it is not being used for fares.
- › You must display a 'No Smoking' sign in your SPSV.

It is the responsibility of the owner and/or person in charge of the SPSV to ensure no one smokes in the vehicle.

If your vehicle is not taxed as an SPSV, the smoking ban still applies while it is being used to carry passengers.

NOTE

Health Service Executive environmental health officers enforce this law. They can prosecute drivers and passengers who break the rules and are not compliant. If a passenger refuses to stop smoking, you have the right to refuse them service.



ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

The RSA says, “**Never, ever, drink and drive**”. It is against the law to drive if you are under the influence of any intoxicant, alcohol or drugs.

If you are taking prescription medicine, check with your doctor to see if it could make you drowsy or affect your driving in any way.

Alcohol affects people differently; you could still have alcohol in your system the day after drinking, so always think carefully before driving after a night out.

Even small amounts of alcohol can:

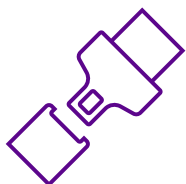
- › Affect your judgment
- › Slow your reactions
- › Make you a danger to yourself and others

FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit www.rsa.ie to download professional driver materials on safe driving or for more information on safer driving, see the following:

- › The Road Safety Authority, www.rsa.ie.
- › The Drink Aware website, www.drinkaware.ie.

SEATBELTS



By law, drivers must always wear a seatbelt while driving. If you do not wear a seatbelt, you are committing a criminal offence.

The only times you do not have to wear a seatbelt are if you have a special medical exemption or you are reversing a vehicle.

If you break this law, you could face a fixed payment penalty, penalty points on your licence or prosecution in court.

SEATBELT RULES FOR ADULT PASSENGERS

Anyone 17 years or older must wear a seatbelt, whether they are in the front or back seat of a vehicle.

Adults who do not wear a seatbelt could be taken to court and prosecuted or fined with a penalty of up to €2,000.

TIP

It is the responsibility of the adult passenger to wear a seatbelt. As a driver, you should remind them if they fail to put it on, but it is not your legal duty to ensure they wear it.

SEATBELT RULES FOR PASSENGERS UNDER AGE 17

The law is different for passengers under 17 years old. As the driver, you are responsible for making sure they wear a seatbelt.

Failure to comply means you could get:

- › A fixed payment penalty
- › Penalty points
- › Prosecuted in court

FURTHER INFORMATION

All information on seatbelts can be found on the An Garda Síochána website:

<https://www.garda.ie>.



SEATBELT RULES FOR CHILDREN

Seatbelts are generally made and designed for adult passengers.

Only children who are at least **150 cm tall (about 4½ feet)** and **36 kg or more** must wear a seatbelt in an SPSV.

Normally, children and babies need a special car seat, harness, or restraint system. However, SPSVs are exempt from this rule.

This means that smaller children and babies can travel without a child seat or restraint in an SPSV. However, they must be:

- › In the back seat of the vehicle
- › Supervised appropriately

NOTE

This is only in a situation where a suitable system is not available - if there is one, they must use it.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ROAD SAFETY AUTHORITY

- ✓ Avoid driver fatigue. Get enough sleep.
- ✓ Drive with care and consideration for all other road users.
- ✓ Drive within the speed limits.
- ✓ Do not use a mobile phone while driving. Switch it off before you start driving.
- ✓ Never drink and drive, and never drive under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
- ✓ Wear a seatbelt.
- ✓ Remind your passengers to wear their seatbelts and ensure that, where appropriate, children are safely and suitably restrained.

10.3 LOOKING AFTER YOUR PERSONAL SECURITY

As an SPSV operator, the nature of your work brings some special risks.



You often work alone at night or in isolated areas. You carry cash and usually do not know your customers. Most of the time, there are no problems, but sometimes, SPSV drivers can find themselves in unpleasant or even dangerous situations.

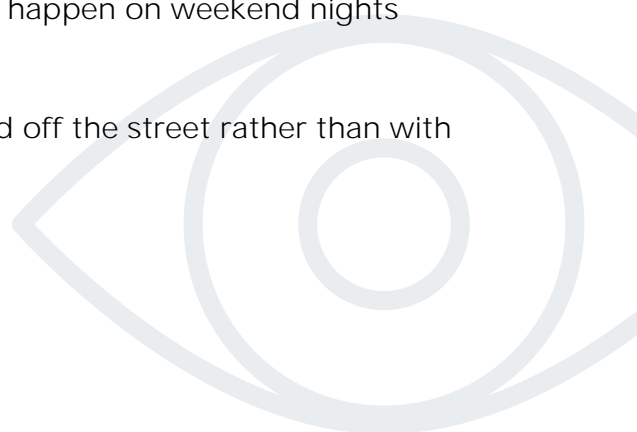
AWARENESS

HIGH-RISK TIMES

The Garda Crime Prevention Unit says that:

- › Violent incidents and robberies are more likely to happen on weekend nights between midnight and 4 AM.
- › Problems are more common with customers hired off the street rather than with pre-booked fares.

Drivers should be extra careful during these times.



SUPPORT

If you work with a dispatch operator, they keep detailed booking records. This gives you an extra level of security. Also, if you have radio contact with your dispatcher, you can call for help immediately if there is a problem or emergency.

To add even more security, some online booking apps also record details of the driver, passenger and the specific journey information.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS



Customers are more likely to become aggressive if they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Be very careful and alert during higher-risk times.

AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA SAFETY TIPS

- ✓ Be careful in isolated areas - Try to pick up customers in well-lit and busy areas. Avoid getting out of your car in isolated spots.
- ✓ Make eye contact - Look carefully at each customer as they get in and keep checking them using your rear-view mirror. This shows them that you have seen them and could identify them later if needed.
- ✓ Be pleasant - Staying friendly and non-confrontational may help to stop aggressive behaviour.
- ✓ Reverse into cul-de-sacs when possible - If you enter a street with only one way out, reverse in. This way, you can drive away quickly if needed.
- ✓ Agree on a code word - Set up a secret code word with your dispatch operator or another contact. You can use it to quietly warn them if you have or suspect a problem.
- ✓ Keep a spare key - Always carry a spare vehicle key in your pocket. If someone steals your ignition key or takes your car and leaves it somewhere, you can still recover it and drive for help.



REDUCING THE RISK OF ROBBERY

As an SPSV driver, you often have cash with you in your vehicle. This can make you a target for robbery.

An Garda Síochána advises you to take the following steps to protect yourself.

CARRY LESS CASH

Deposit cash at a bank or leave large amounts in a secure place at home during a break.

INSTALL SECURITY EQUIPMENT

Think about fitting an alarm or immobiliser to your vehicle for extra security.

HIDE VALUABLES AND YOUR POSSESSIONS

Keep any items of value like wallets, watches, or phones out of sight. Expensive-looking jewellery can also make you more of a target. Remove GPS, sat navs, or phone equipment when you leave your car.

HIDE YOUR CASH FROM CUSTOMERS

Only show customers enough money for change. If customers ask about your working day, do not say that you have been busy, had a long day, or that you have made a lot of money.

LOCK YOUR VEHICLE

Always lock your vehicle when you are not inside it and keep your doors locked and windows closed whenever you are driving in an isolated area, parked on the street, or waiting for a customer.

TIP

When picking up customers in isolated places, call them on the phone rather than getting out of your vehicle. And at night, ask customers to leave a porch or hall light on to help you find them safely.



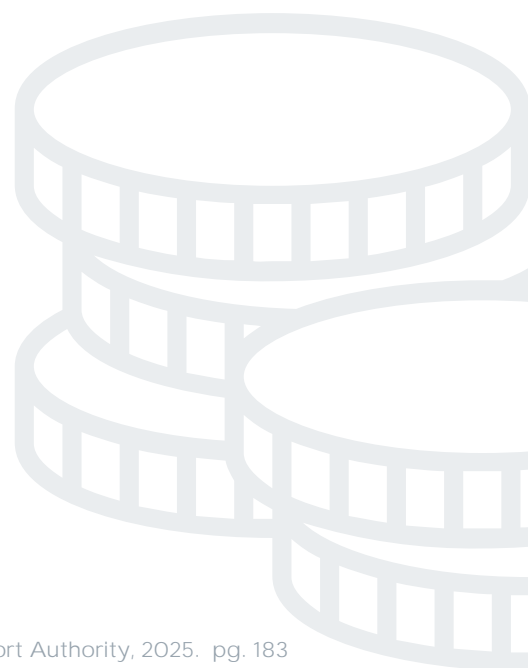
REDUCING THE RISK OF FARE EVASION

Fare evasion (when a customer leaves without paying) is a problem that many SPSV drivers face.

An Garda Síochána recommends the following tips to help reduce the risk.

<p>Ask for an exact address - Know exactly where you are going before starting the journey. If you are unsure whether the customer can pay, tell your dispatch operator.</p>	<p>Do not act illegally - You must not force a customer to stay or take them somewhere against their will. If there is a problem, call An Garda Síochána and politely ask the passenger to stay until they arrive.</p>
<p>Do not chase fare evaders - Your safety is more important than a lost fare. Never put yourself at risk by chasing someone.</p>	<p>Settle the fare inside the vehicle - Customers are more likely to avoid paying if they are already out of the vehicle. Always ask for the fare while they are still inside.</p>

Ask for a deposit - If you are worried that a customer cannot pay, you can ask for a deposit or proof of the ability to pay before accepting the fare. If they refuse to pay a deposit, you may refuse service. If you take a deposit, it must not be more than the expected fare. If the meter shows a lower fare than the deposit, you must refund the difference.







USING SECURITY EQUIPMENT

There are many products and safety devices that can help to protect SPSV drivers.

You could install a safety screen to protect yourself from attack by someone sitting behind you or fit an extra rear-view mirror to see the full back seat.

You could also make use of any of the following options.

 <p>INSTALL A SECURITY CAMERA</p> <p>Good-quality cameras can provide evidence in court. If you install a camera, you must follow data protection laws and respect customer privacy.</p>	 <p>USE A GPS</p> <p>Some navigation devices allow location tracking. These devices can link to an alarm that you can activate in an emergency. The dispatcher can then send An Garda Síochána straight to your location.</p>	 <p>USE AN EMERGENCY RADIO</p> <p>Some radios have an 'open mic' switch that lets you quickly call for help.</p>	 <p>USE YOUR MOBILE PHONE</p> <p>Many smartphones have GPS and emergency features built in that you can use.</p>
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USING CCTV (CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION)

If you want to use CCTV equipment, you should first talk to a legal adviser or contact the Data Protection Commissioner for advice using www.dataprotection.ie.

You need to think about whether you have a good reason to use CCTV. You must also check what the law says about how you store and use the video, especially if you need to use it later as evidence and getting a customer's permission, for example, by putting up clear signs inside your vehicle.

WHAT TO DO AFTER A SAFETY INCIDENT

If you are the victim of an attack or robbery, An Garda Síochána advises you to stay as calm as possible. Do not chase after the person who attacked you.

1	Call for help and raise the alarm as soon as you can.
2	If you are injured, call an ambulance right away.
3	Report the incident to An Garda Síochána and your dispatch operator if you have one.
4	If you have a security camera, save and protect the video evidence.
5	Write down any details of the incident as soon as possible, so that you can remember and share any relevant information with the authorities.

The kind of details you should document for an incident include:

- › Where, when and how the incident happened.
- › A description of the attacker.
- › To whom you have reported the incident.
- › Any hazard avoidance and safety equipment used.

TIP

Report incidents, even if you think the incident is minor; it could be part of a bigger investigation. Reporting the incident may help solve other crimes.

As explained in *Chapter 3, Choosing a vehicle to use as an SPSV*, all SPSV drivers must carry certain safety equipment in their vehicles.

If there is a crash or fire, the safety equipment should be easy to reach so that anyone nearby can use it right away.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more details about safety equipment and programs, you can download the Initial Suitability Inspection Manual at www.nationaltransport.ie. This manual also gives technical information about in-vehicle safety equipment.

For more advice about using CCTV, you can contact the Data Protection Commissioner at www.dataprotection.ie.

If you are working outside of your vehicle in poorly lit areas at night, you should wear your high-visibility vest. For example, wear it if you are loading luggage or helping someone in a wheelchair get into your vehicle on a dark road.

10.4 WHAT TO DO IN A COLLISION OR EMERGENCY

People who are hurt in a road collision have a much greater chance of survival if they receive first aid and medical assistance immediately or within the first hour after a collision.

The golden rule is 'do no harm'. Do not risk your own safety trying to make a heroic rescue. If you put yourself in danger, you might not be able to help others, and you could make things worse.

NOTE

Make sure nobody smokes near an accident. Smoking is dangerous and a fire risk.

TIP

You might suffer from shock, even after a small crash or traffic incident. If you can, get someone else to drive you home and rest until you are sure you have recovered.



Here are some important steps to follow if you are at the scene of a collision or emergency.

1	Stay calm - Turn off your engine and put on the handbrake.
2	Make sure you and those around you are safe before helping others.
3	Turn on your hazard warning lights, put on your high-visibility vest and place the advance-warning triangle a good distance away to alert traffic.
4	Call for help - Dial 999 or 112. Give clear information about the location of the collision, how many vehicles are involved and how many people are hurt.
5	Report the collision - If anyone is hurt, you must report the collision to An Garda Síochána, either at the scene or at the nearest Garda station. Provide your name, vehicle details and insurance information to others involved and to any witnesses who ask for it.
6	Help any injured people - Cover injured people with coats or blankets to keep them warm. Do not move them or give them anything to eat or drink. Only move injured people if there is a risk of fire or if you think a vehicle might overturn. Do not remove helmets from motorcyclists. Never try to lift a vehicle off someone without professional help.
7	Wait for help - Monitor any injured persons. If someone's condition gets worse, call 999 or 112 again and update the emergency services.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The following organisations publish useful information and provide training courses on first aid and what to do in the event of a collision or emergency.

- › The Road Safety Authority, www.rsa.ie.
- › The Irish Red Cross, www.redcross.ie.
- › The Order of Malta, <https://orderofmaltaireland.org/>.
- › The St John Ambulance Brigade of Ireland, St John Ambulance Ireland – Occupational First Aid Courses and Event Medical Cover Ireland. <https://stjohn.ie/>.

10.5 HANDLING AND TRANSPORTING LUGGAGE AND OTHER HEAVY ITEMS



Many people miss work because they get injured lifting or handling heavy or bulky items incorrectly. These injuries often include back problems.

As an SPSV driver, you will often be asked to help customers with their luggage, so it is a good idea to learn how to do it safely.

All SPSV drivers are encouraged to take an in-person handling course from a professional organisation.

Before lifting any item, think carefully.

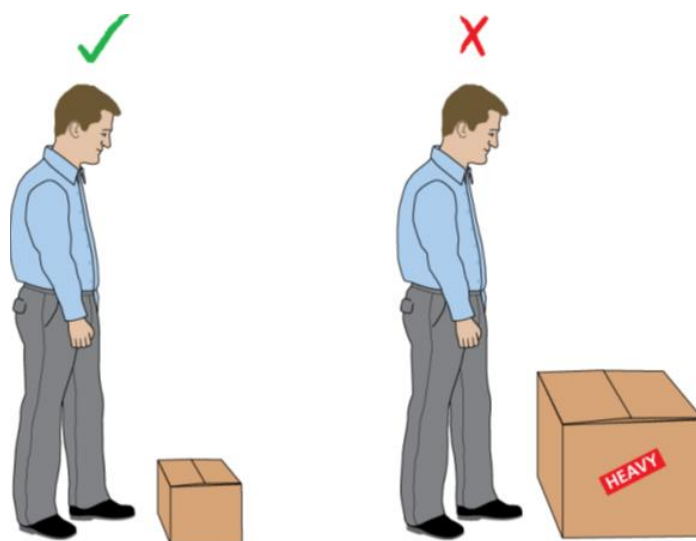
- › Can you safely load it into your vehicle?
- › Will carrying or transporting the item cause a health or safety risk to you, your passenger, or other people?

For example, very large luggage that cannot be properly secured might move around, block your view through the windows, or make it harder to control the vehicle.

As an SPSV driver, you have the right to refuse to lift or carry any item that you believe could cause injury to you or anyone else.

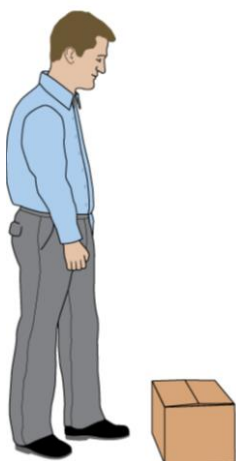
SOME GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING HEAVY OR BULKY ITEMS

The Health and Safety Authority offers some guidelines to help you reduce the risk of injuring yourself.



1. Lift only if it is safe:

Only lift or move something if it is safe for you to do so. Just because you can lift something does not always mean it is safe to lift it. Also, remember it is often easier and safer to put something into the luggage area of a vehicle than to take it out.



2. Think before you lift:

Before you lift anything, take a moment to plan. Clear away anything that might be in your way. Decide exactly where you are going to put the item before you lift it.



3. Start in a good position:

Stand with good balance with your feet a little apart. Put one foot slightly (a little) in front of the other to help you stay steady. Bend your knees and your back slightly. Do not stoop — bending too much at the waist can cause injury.



4. Keep a good hold on the item:

Hold the item close to your body. Keep the heaviest part of the item nearest to you. Move smoothly when lifting - avoid sudden jerking or quick movements.

5. Keep your head up and look ahead:

When lifting, keep your head up and look straight ahead. Keep your shoulders in line with your hips. Do not bend, twist your back, or lean to the side while lifting. If you need to turn, move your feet instead of twisting your body.



6. Put it down before you adjust:

If you need to move an item into a better position — like in the luggage area of your vehicle, put it down first. Slide or adjust it carefully. Do not try to twist or move while still holding the item.

10.6 COMPLYING WITH REGULATIONS

YOUR SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELFARE

Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005, self-employed people, including most SPSV drivers, must follow the same legal rules as employers. This means you must take all reasonable steps to protect the safety, health and welfare of anyone at your workplace - which, for you, is your vehicle.



VEHICLE SAFETY

You are legally required to identify and document any hazards that could put you or your passengers at risk and take reasonable steps to remove the risks identified.

For example, you must:

- › Keep your vehicle in good condition.
- › Drive safely.
- › Make sure passengers do not act in ways that put you, themselves, or others in danger.

HEALTH AND WELFARE

You must also consider:

- › Noise and exhaust fumes
- › Very hot or cold temperatures
- › Danger of crashes, fires, or explosions
- › Fatigue and stress

Fatigue (being too tired) is a known danger for drivers. You must take steps to manage it and keep yourself and others safe. You must advise your employer if fatigue affects your ability to work.

If you are an employee (not a sole trader or self-employed), you still have a duty to protect your own safety and the safety of others.



MANAGING SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELFARE

When you see any risks, take action to manage them.

For example:

- › Get more safety information.
- › Attend a training course.
- › Buy protective equipment.
- › Learn how to adjust your seat and steering wheel for comfort and safety by reading your vehicle manual.
- › Control the heating, cooling and air systems properly inside your car.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, contact the Health & Safety Authority, www.hsa.ie.



CHAPTER 11: PREPARING FOR YOUR TEST

11

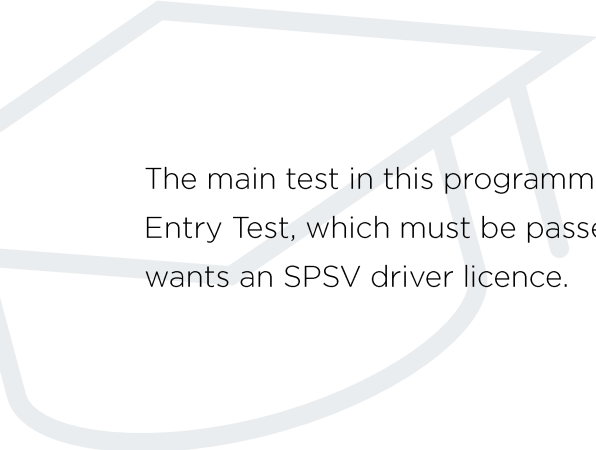
CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter gives details of the tests within NTA's Skills Development Programme and how they are managed. It also provides a sample of the types of questions that you can expect in these tests.

- › Testing in the Skills Development Programme
- › SPSV Driver Entry Test
- › Test administration
- › What you need to know for the Industry Knowledge Module
- › What you need to know for the Area Knowledge Module

11.1 TESTING IN THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

NTA has a Skills Development Programme for the SPSV industry. This programme includes tests to check drivers' knowledge of the industry rules and the area they work in.



The main test in this programme is the SPSV Driver Entry Test, which must be passed by everyone who wants an SPSV driver licence.

TIP

This requirement does not apply for local area hackney driver licences.

The test has two parts. An Industry Knowledge Module and an Area Knowledge Module.

The Area Knowledge module can also be taken by current SPSV drivers who want to stand or ply for hire in a new county as a standalone test.



11.2 SPSV DRIVER ENTRY TEST

The SPSV Driver Entry Test checks that you understand the rules of the SPSV industry, as explained in the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 and the Taxi Regulation Small Public Service Vehicle Regulations 2015.

INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE MODULE

The Industry Knowledge Module has 54 questions about the regulations and best practices in the SPSV industry, which are explained in this Manual. This Manual is the only material you need to study for this module.

THE AREA KNOWLEDGE MODULE

The Area Knowledge Module checks if you know the area where you want to work.

The SPSV Driver Entry Test includes a tutorial which is 28 minutes in length, the Industry Knowledge Module which is 54 minutes in length and the Area Knowledge Module which is 36 minutes in length.

The entire test will take a maximum of 1 hour and 58 minutes.

NOTE

If you are already a licensed SPSV driver and want to work in another county, you must pass the Area Knowledge Module for that county.

PASSING REQUIREMENTS



The first time you take the test you must pass both the Industry Knowledge Module and the Area Knowledge Module for the county you want to operate in.

You need a score of 75% or higher to pass each module.

If you only pass one module, you can retake just the module you failed; however, you must pass both modules within one year of your first test or you will have to retake the full SPSV Driver Entry Test.

Each test costs the same whether it is for both modules or for only one.

11.3 TEST ADMINISTRATION

HOW TO APPLY FOR A TEST

You can take your SPSV Driver Entry Test at one of five locations across the country. You can pick a time and place that works best for you.

When you are ready, you can apply for your test by calling 0818 064 000.

If you have any special requirements, highlight them when you book your test. For those with an official supporting education or medical document, there are options for extra support, such as extra time or one-on-one assistance. This one-on-one assistance is in the form of a reader. The reader cannot assist in the test in any way; they will simply read the questions to you as required.

Make sure you have the following to apply.

TEST APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Your contact details.
- ☐ Your PPS number.
- ☐ Your full Irish driving licence or a driving licence from another EU, EEA, or recognized country.
- ☐ The test fee, which can be paid by credit/debit card, cheque, or postal order.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information, call 0818 064 000 or visit www.nationaltransport.ie.

When your application is processed, you will get an email or letter with the date, time and location of your test.

You will also be reminded of the documents you need to bring with you.

THE TEST APPOINTMENT

Bring your current driving licence and proof of identification. This will be checked when you arrive at the test centre.

When your ID and documents are confirmed, your personal items will be locked away and you will be taken to a workstation to begin the test.

TAKING THE TEST

The test is done on a computer.

Before the test begins, there will be a short tutorial on how to answer the questions. You do not need to know how to use a computer to take the test.

If you run out of time during the test it will automatically finish. The time remaining will always be clearly displayed on the screen.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

You will use a mouse or a touch screen to answer the questions.

Each question will have multiple-choice options for you to choose from.

Some questions in the test have only one correct answer and you will need to choose the answer you think is right by clicking or touching the relevant option. Other questions may ask you to pick two correct answers.

CHANGING ANSWERS

During the test, you can change or cancel your answers within each module.

SKIPPING QUESTIONS

If you skip any questions, they will be highlighted at the end of the module for you to try again. However, once you finish the module, you cannot go back to review your answers, so remember to check everything before you finish the test.



CONDUCT DURING THE TEST

The test is watched by a person called an “invigilator” and is recorded on CCTV.

You are not allowed to talk to other candidates, use written materials, or use your mobile phone or other devices during the test. Breaking these rules will disqualify you from the test and from taking future tests for a certain time.

TEST RESULTS

The test is scored automatically, and you will get your results immediately.

PASS

If you pass both modules, NTA will give you the SPSV Skills Development Certificate at the test centre on the same day.

FAIL

If you fail both modules, you will receive a report with the details on how to apply for and retake the test.

If you pass one module and fail the other, you will get a report with the details on how to apply for and retake the module you failed.

TIP

Remember, to avoid having to redo the whole test with both modules, you must pass both modules within one year of taking the test.



11.4 WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR THE INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE MODULE

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE

Here are some examples of the questions you might see in this module.

Which of the following describes a taxi standing for hire?

- a. The taxi is parked on a road.
- b. The taxi is stationary and available for hire.
- c. The taxi is in motion and available for hire.
- d. The taxi has a passenger and is on route.

The Fixed Payment Offence 'Failure to display tamper-proof licence disc' carries a penalty of:

- a. €60
- b. €80
- c. €150
- d. €250

To complete a change of vehicle process, the applicant must confirm that they:

- a. Own the new vehicle.
- b. Have been employed to drive the new vehicle.
- c. Own or hold the replacement vehicle under lease or hire-purchase.
- d. Have a formal agreement in place to rent the new vehicle.

How many weeks prior to the expiry date are drivers advised to renew their SPSV driver licences?

- a. 6 weeks
- b. 8 weeks
- c. 10 weeks
- d. 12 weeks

Which of the following is found on a taxi's In-Vehicle Information Card?

- a. The vehicle registration number.
- b. The operator's name.
- c. The taxi licence number.
- d. Information on how to understand a taxi fare.

If seats have been added or adapted to a vehicle, where would you need to get certification?

- a. Any garage.
- b. An NCT centre.
- c. The vehicle vendor.
- d. The manufacturer.

11.5 WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR THE AREA KNOWLEDGE MODULE



To provide customers with reliable, fast service, there is an expectation that as a professional driver, you will have better-than-average knowledge of the area you are operating in. This makes the Area Knowledge Module an important part of the NTA's SPSV Driver Entry Test.

This module is designed to ensure that you are familiar with the county where you want to work as an SPSV driver. If you are a qualified SPSV driver and you want to work in another county, you must also pass this test for that county.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR AREA KNOWLEDGE

Here are some examples of the questions you might see in this module.

1. Urban centres - Streets: Drury Street runs one-way between which of the following streets? (Dublin)

- a. South Great George's Street to South William Street.
- b. Stephen Street Lower to Exchequer Street.
- c. South William Street to Clarendon Street.
- d. South William Street to King Street South.

2. Urban centres – Districts: When travelling from Adare to Newcastle West, which of the following places does a driver pass through? (Limerick)

- a. Ardagh
- b. Ballingarry
- c. Dromcollogher
- d. Croagh

3. Hotels: On what road in Carlow Town is the Dolmen Hotel located? (Carlow)

- a. Hacketstown Road
- b. Athy Road
- c. Portlaoise Road
- d. Kilkenny Road

4. Hospitals: The main entrance to Cork University Hospital is accessed directly from what road in Cork City? (Cork)

- a. Sarsfield Road
- b. Curraheen Road
- c. Wilton Road
- d. Bishopstown Road

5. Landmark: Where in Waterford City is the Clock Tower located? (Waterford)

- a. Dock Road
- b. Grattan Quay
- c. Meagher's Quay
- d. Abbey Road

KEY INFORMATION FOR THE AREA KNOWLEDGE MODULE

Here is a summary of the key information you should focus on while preparing for your test.

LOCAL AREA KNOWLEDGE

You will need to know the following for the area you want to operate in.

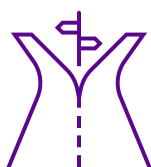
- › Main street names for urban centres
- › Motorways
- › Districts or regions
- › Routes to other towns or villages
- › Well known hotels, bars and restaurants
- › Landmarks particularly those popular with tourists
- › Hospitals
- › Transport hubs (train stations, airports, bus stations)
- › Sports venues
- › Entertainment hubs (concert venues, theatres)
- › Universities and further education institutions
- › Shopping centres



LOCAL PLACES OF INTEREST

You should also be familiar with all the important or relevant locations and landmarks within the area you operate. Places include:

			
Hospitals and medical centres.	Nearest airports. The nearest airport might not be located within your operating area.	Local ferries and boat services.	Transport terminals, for example, buses, trains and the Luas.
			
Hotels and holiday centres.	Stadiums or arenas.	Prominent sports clubs, for example, golf clubs, yacht clubs and tennis clubs.	Major landmarks.
			
Tourist attractions, including museums, galleries and visitor centres.	Leisure facilities, for example, swimming pools, bowling alleys, cinemas, theatres, well-known pubs, restaurants and nightclubs.	Shopping centres and retail parks.	Third-level institutions like universities, Education & Training Boards (ETBs).



SURROUNDING TOWNS AND VILLAGES

You will also need to know some key information about surrounding towns and villages as they relate to all regional and national routes. Questions in the test may reference towns and other locations in counties bordering the county being tested.

For example, an applicant in Kilkenny might be asked about routes to Waterford City or New Ross.

BUILDING UP YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Here are some tips to help build up your knowledge of the area you operate in.

Study street and road maps to learn the main roads and districts in the county.

Focus on one district at a time and use the map to find the main roads and places that are important, like hospitals and transport hubs.

Walk or cycle around a district with a map when it is not too busy. This can help you get to know the area better. Compare the map with what you see, noting things like one-way streets and dead ends.

Drive around a district. Familiarise yourself with the layout and flow of the area, including one-way streets.

Always drive safely and only look at the map when your vehicle is stopped.

APPENDICES



APPENDIX A: VEHICLE AGE RULES

A

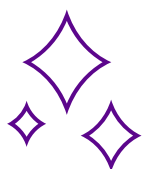
- › New licence transactions
- › Licence renewal transactions
- › Change of vehicle transactions
- › Exchange of licence category

This appendix specifically addresses the rules that apply to the various stages of an SPSV's age.

A vehicle's age is calculated from the date it was first registered in any country. This date is shown in Box B of the vehicle's registration certificate, also called "the logbook".

The maximum age a vehicle can be licensed for as an SPSV depends on three things.

- 1 The type of licence transaction. Is the transaction for a new licence, a renewal, a change of vehicle, or a change in licence category?
- 2 The licence category. Is the SPSV a taxi, wheelchair accessible taxi, hackney, wheelchair accessible hackney, local area hackney, or limousine?
- 3 The licence history. When was the SPSV licence first issued? When was the vehicle first linked to that licence? And has the licence category ever changed?



NEW LICENCE TRANSACTIONS

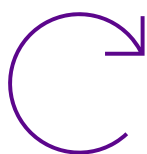
For a new vehicle licence, the maximum age of a vehicle should be as follows.

For standard taxis and hackneys	New licences are currently not available.
For local area hackney licences	The vehicle must be 10 years old or newer.
For wheelchair accessible taxi or hackney licences	The vehicle should not be older than 6 years.
For limousines	There is no maximum age limit.

LICENCE RENEWAL TRANSACTIONS

A vehicle licence can be renewed only until the vehicle associated with it reaches its maximum age. Here are the maximum ages for the different vehicle categories.

For standard taxi and hackney licences numbered below 45,000, where the vehicle has not been changed since 1 January 2013	The vehicle licence can be renewed for up to 15 years.
For standard taxi and hackney licences numbered 45,001 or over, where the vehicle has not been changed since 1 January 2013	The vehicle licence can only be renewed for up to 10 years.
For wheelchair accessible taxis and hackneys, where the vehicle has not been changed since 1 April 2014	There is no age limit for renewal.
For wheelchair accessible taxis and hackneys, where the vehicle has been changed since 1 April 2014	The vehicle licence can be renewed for up to 15 years.
For limousines	There is no age limit for renewal.



CHANGE OF VEHICLE TRANSACTIONS

When a vehicle associated with a vehicle licence is changed, the following maximum age limit applies to the replacement vehicle.

For standard taxis, standard hackneys and local area hackneys	The replacement vehicle must be 10 years old or newer.
For wheelchair accessible taxis or hackneys licensed before 1 April 2014	The replacement vehicle must be 10 years old or newer.
For wheelchair accessible taxis or hackneys licensed on or after 1 April 2014	The replacement vehicle should be 10 years old or the same age as the vehicle it is replacing, whichever age is newer.
For replacement limousines	There is no maximum age limit.

EXCHANGE OF LICENCE CATEGORY

The holder of a standard taxi licence may apply to exchange their licence for a wheelchair accessible taxi licence, and a person who has previously exchanged a standard taxi licence for a wheelchair accessible taxi licence may also apply to return to having a standard taxi licence.

The maximum age limit of the vehicle for a change in licence category is:

- › 6 years for a wheelchair accessible taxi replacing a standard taxi.
- › 10 years for a standard taxi replacing a wheelchair accessible taxi.



APPENDIX B: LOCAL AREA HACKNEYS

- › Applying for a local area hackney vehicle licence
- › Renewing a local area hackney vehicle licence
- › Applying for a local area hackney driver licence
- › Renewing a local area hackney driver licence

B

In many ways, the regulations for local area hackneys and local area drivers are the same as those for hackneys and their drivers. However, there are some important differences, and they are explained below.



APPLYING FOR A LOCAL AREA HACKNEY VEHICLE LICENCE

The steps for applying are mostly the same as in *Chapter 3, Choosing a vehicle to use as an SPSV* and *Chapter 4, Vehicle licensing*, but with the following additions and exceptions:

- › You must provide a letter from a local business representative, company or a local charity confirming the need for a local area hackney service in the proposed area.
- › You must also provide an analysis report showing there is a real need for this service. This report must be done by, or on behalf of, the local authority. The local authority must also confirm in writing that the need exists.

Local area hackney licences clearly state which area they cover.

NOTE

Licence holders must not offer or promote hackney services outside that area.

NOTE

If you hold a local area hackney licence, you cannot hold any other SPSV vehicle licence at the same time.

RENEWING A LOCAL AREA HACKNEY VEHICLE LICENCE

A local area hackney licence must be renewed every year, in the same way as a standard hackney licence. See *Chapter 4, Vehicle licensing*.

You can only renew the licence for three years after the date it was first granted. After the third anniversary of the vehicle licence, if you want to continue operating, you must make a new application and provide all the required documents as described above.



APPLYING FOR A LOCAL AREA HACKNEY DRIVER LICENCE

To apply for a local area hackney driver licence, the process and requirements are like those described in *Chapter 2, SPSV driver licensing*, with the following additions and exceptions.

- › You must first hold a local area hackney vehicle licence.
- › You must provide evidence that your application is for the area where the local area hackney licence was granted.
- › You do not need to pass the SPSV Driver Entry Test.

RENEWING THE LOCAL AREA HACKNEY DRIVER LICENCE

Local area hackney driver licences last for three years. They cannot be renewed.

If you want to keep driving after that, you must apply again with the required documents, just like the first time.



APPENDIX C: DISPATCH OPERATOR LICENSING

- › Requirements for operating as an SPSV dispatch operator
- › Drivers and vehicles
- › Booking services
- › Customer complaints
- › Applying for an SPSV dispatch operator licence

C

This appendix explains the licensing requirements and procedures that apply to SPSV dispatch operators.

REQUIREMENTS FOR OPERATING AS AN SPSV DISPATCH OPERATOR

A dispatch operator is a person who takes bookings for SPSV services that are provided by someone else. They can also offer a service that helps passengers book an SPSV by themselves.

Under the Taxi Regulation Act 2013, NTA has the power to regulate dispatch operators and issue dispatch operator licences.

NOTE

If you want to run a booking service for SPSVs, you must get a dispatch operator licence from NTA.

DISPATCH OPERATOR STANDARDS

- ✓ They must be up to date on their tax affairs. This will be verified online with Revenue during the processing of the application.
- ✓ They must maintain up-to-date records of all drivers working with them, including vehicle and driver licences and insurance records.
- ✓ They must keep a record of all bookings received.
- ✓ They must provide NTA with the contact information used for booking SPSV services, including any business trading name being used or intended to be used.
- ✓ They must have a procedure for recording and dealing with complaints.
- ✓ They must pay the relevant licence fee to NTA.

DRIVERS AND VEHICLES

Dispatch operators who work with drivers must make sure that:

- › Each driver has a full, valid driving licence and a current SPSV driver licence.
- › Each vehicle being driven is licensed and insured as an SPSV.
- › They keep records of their drivers. This includes contact details and licence information.

BOOKING SERVICES

Dispatch operators must have a way to keep records of all bookings. These records must be shown to NTA if requested.

Dispatch operators play an important role in providing services to people with disabilities.

They should organise their drivers so that a fully accessible service is available during working hours.

Operators of wheelchair accessible vehicles must give priority to passengers who wish to travel in their wheelchairs during a journey.

TIP

Many wheelchair bookings are made through dispatch operators. For this reason, drivers with wheelchair accessible vehicles are encouraged to be affiliated or work with a dispatch operator.



CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

Dispatch operators must have a complaints system in place that customers can use if they are unhappy with their service.

- › If a customer has a complaint about a service they booked, they should first talk to the dispatch operator. If the problem is not resolved, they can then contact NTA.
- › Dispatch operators must record the details of any complaints and what action they took to address the complaint.
- › Dispatch operators must share their complaint records with NTA when requested to do so.

APPLYING FOR AN SPSV DISPATCH OPERATOR LICENCE



To apply for a dispatch operator licence, go to NTA website and download *Form DO1 - Application for a Dispatch Operator Licence* and the guidance note that accompanies the form.

Complete the form and send it with the licence fee to:

SPSV Licensing Section
National Transport Authority
PO Box 436
City North Business Park
Tuam Road
Galway



