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THE OFFICIAL MANUAL FOR OPERATING IN THE SPSV INDUSTRY AS A LOCAL AREA HACKNEY



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The Official Manual for Operating in the SPSV Industry as a Local Area Hackney, Edition 1.0

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

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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.

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 as a Local Area Hackney licence holder*.

The Manual has been created by the National Transport Authority (NTA) to give Local Area Hackney (LAH) operators the information they need to apply for and maintain licences.

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.



TERMS USED BY THE SPSV INDUSTRY

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

CCSN This is your Confidential Customer Service Number included on all correspondence issued in relation to your SPSV licence.

Driver display card A driver display card is an identification card that LAH drivers must display in their vehicles. This card is proof that the driver is licensed to provide LAH services. This card provides essential information such as driver ID, photograph, and the LAH area where they are licensed to operate.

Driver smart card A driver smart card is a small identification card that shows essential information about the LAH driver. This must always be carried by the LAH driver while operating.

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. This includes an SPSV Local Area Hackney driver licence.

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. This includes an SPSV Local Area Hackney licence.



CHAPTER 1: THE SPSV INDUSTRY

1

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter gives a general overview of the role of NTA in relation to the wider Small Public Service Vehicle sector, relevant to Local Area Hackney applicants and licence holders.

- › Local Area Hackney licences
- › About the National Transport Authority (NTA)
- › Licensing vehicles, drivers, and dispatch operators
- › Rules and regulations for SPSVs and their drivers
- › National SPSV registers (licence database)

1.1 LOCAL AREA HACKNEY LICENCES

The Local Area Hackney licence is a special, limited hackney licence that supports rural community transport through a locally operated hackney service. It is different to the regular taxi and hackney licences that are available for application from the NTA, which have more requirements but, for instance, allow licence holders to operate nationwide.

As this is a limited licence, a Local Area Hackney licence holder:

- May only pick up passengers within the rural area you are licenced for.
- Can drop these passengers (that they have picked up in their licenced area) at any location, but if the drop off is outside your licenced area, you cannot pick up new passengers at that location.
- May have up to five Local Area Hackney drivers (including themselves) operating the same Local Area Hackney.

To support passengers, the NTA has developed this Manual, which contains important information for applying for their licence and supporting their local business.

1.2 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 your Local Area Hackney licence.



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 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 Taxi Regulation Act 2013 as amended, and related regulations underpin the regulation of the sector by the NTA.



THE BENEFITS OF REGULATION

The NTA is responsible for setting standards that must be met by all operators in the SPSV industry. Regulation benefits both SPSV operators and their customers.

<p>EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>Regulation ensures 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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THE NTA OBJECTIVES

Here are the main objectives of the NTA for the SPSV sector.

<p>Promote and support the provision of affordable high-quality services delivered by SPSVs and their drivers.</p>	<p>Invest in activities that improve and support affordable high-quality SPSV services.</p> 
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<p>Help increase the connection and placement of taxi services into the public transport system.</p> 	<p>Manage the development of a professional, safe, well-organised and customer-friendly service.</p>
<p>Commit to the protection and respect of both SPSV operators and their customers.</p>	<p>Encourage and support competition for SPSV services and standards including pricing, fares, and customer satisfaction.</p> 
<p>Help small public service vehicles become more available and affordable for people with disabilities, mobility, or sensory challenges.</p> 	<p>Improve the services offered by small public service vehicles, promote progress and innovation through support and investment.</p>
<p>Strengthen and encourage development of high-quality affordable services that meet customer needs, including passengers with mobility or sensory impairments.</p>	<p>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.</p> 

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 membership of the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles, also known as *the Taxi Advisory Committee*, is chosen by the Minister for Transport.



The Advisory Committee gives advice to the Minister or the NTA on issues that are important to SPSVs and their companies. It speaks for many different partners and interest 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
- › Specialist experts

The NTA can consult or seek the advice of the Advisory Committee on matters relating to the sector; however, the NTA can decide whether to take or act on the advice.

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 (see SPSV Licences next).



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.

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.

 <p>Taxis</p>	 <p>Wheelchair accessible taxis</p>	 <p>Limousines</p>
 <p>Hackneys</p>	 <p>Wheelchair accessible hackneys</p>	 <p>Local area hackneys</p>

The rules and requirements for vehicle licensing are described in *Chapter 3, Choosing a vehicle to use as Local Area Hackney*. 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. In the case of a Local Area Hackney service, a dispatch operator may not act as a dispatch operator for more than one area. This means that a Local Area Hackney operator cannot be affiliated with a dispatch operator outside of their assigned Local Area Hackney area. In most cases this may mean that the Local Area Hackney licence holder also manages the bookings for that local service.

1.4 RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR SPSVS AND THEIR DRIVERS



Under the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 as amended, 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
- › Revenue
- › The Department of Social Protection
- › The Department of Transport

- › The Health & Safety Authority
- › The Equality Authority
- › The Office of the Ombudsman
- › The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
- › The Data Protection Commission

1.5 NATIONAL SPSV REGISTERS (LICENCE DATABASE)



NATIONAL REGISTER

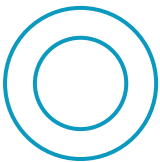
Under Section 18 of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 as amended, the NTA must keep an official list of licences, known as the national register.

The 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.

LOCAL AREA HACKNEY LICENCE HOLDER INFORMATION

For Local Area Hackney licence holders, the register includes the following additional details.

- › The name and address of the Local Area Hackney licence holder.
- › The date on which the Local Area Hackney 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.



LOCAL AREA HACKNEY VEHICLE LICENCE INFORMATION

For Local Area Hackney vehicle licences, the register includes the following additional details.

- › The Local Area Hackney vehicle licence number.
- › The registration number of the licensed Local Area Hackney vehicle.
- › Details of any changes of the Local Area Hackney vehicle connected with the licence.



LOCAL AREA HACKNEY DRIVER LICENCE INFORMATION

For Local Area Hackney driver licences, the register includes the following additional details.

- › The Local Area Hackney driver licence number.
- › The Local Area Hackney driver licence photograph.
- › The Local Area Hackney area where the Local Area Hackney 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 as amended, 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.

Local Area Hackney driver licence information:

- › Local Area Hackney driver licence number
- › The holder’s name
- › Local Area Hackney licence expiry date

Local Area Hackney vehicle licence information:

- › Local Area Hackney vehicle licence number
- › Local Area Hackney vehicle registration number
- › Local Area Hackney vehicle make and model
- › Local Area Hackney licence expiry date



CHAPTER 2: LOCAL AREA HACKNEY DRIVER LICENSING

2

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter explains how to get a Local Area Hackney driver licence.

- › Introduction to the Local Area Hackney driver licence
- › Requirements to get a Local Area Hackney driver licence
- › Local Area Hackney driver licence application process
- › Your rights and responsibilities

2.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE LOCAL AREA HACKNEY DRIVER LICENCE

RESPONSIBLE ORGANISATIONS

There are two organisations involved in the SPSV Local Area Hackney 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 Local Area Hackney driver licence application forms (PSV 15) at Garda stations.

Managing Local Area Hackney applications that are received.

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

Where appropriate, granting, renewing or revoking Local Area Hackney driver licences (PSV 17).

NTA RESPONSIBILITIES

Administering the Safeguarding and Disability Awareness professional development course.

Collecting Local Area Hackney driver licence fees.

Issuing the Local Area Hackney driver identification (ID) cards once the Local Area Hackney driver's licence has been granted by An Garda Síochána. A Local Area Hackney 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 A LOCAL AREA HACKNEY DRIVER LICENCE

Local Area Hackney 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 a Local Area Hackney 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 have successfully completed the free, online professional development course for Safeguarding and Disability Awareness.
- › They are fully up to date with their taxes. An applicant's tax clearance status will be checked and confirmed online by NTA.

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 LOCAL AREA HACKNEY DRIVER LICENCE APPLICATION PROCESS

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 their licenced Local Area Hackney.
- › The licence specifies a restricted area where the holder can pick up passengers.
- › A person applying for a Local Area Hackney driver licence must already have a vehicle licence for a Local Area Hackney.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

1

STEP 1: COMPLETE THE COURSE AND PAY THE FEE

To apply for a Local Area Hackney driver licence, you must¹:

- › Already hold a Local Area Hackney vehicle licence for the area on the application.
- › Complete the free, online, professional development course for Safeguarding and Disability Awareness.
- › Pay the €25 Local Area Hackney driver licence fee to the NTA. You can do this by calling the Information Line – 0818 064 000.

NTA will provide a paper copy of the receipt, 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 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.

LOCAL AREA HACKNEY DRIVER LICENCE APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- The receipt for your licence fee.
- Proof of your tax clearance status.
- Your current driving licence and your driver licence history available from the National Driver Licence Service (NDLS).
- Three official passport standard 10 x 7 cm photographs of you.

¹ 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.

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 as amended.
- Any additional documents requested by An Garda Síochána.

When you have everything on the checklist, go to your local Garda station and complete the PSV 15 application form.

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.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



MANDATORY DISQUALIFICATION

If you have been found guilty and convicted of certain crimes, in Ireland or elsewhere, listed in the Taxi Regulation Acts 2013 as amended, you cannot hold a Local Area Hackney driver licence.

DISQUALIFICATION PERIODS

 <p>Life</p>	 <p>12 months</p>	 <p>Five years</p>	 <p>Time + 3-5 yrs</p>
<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 below 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 a Local Area Hackney 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 the 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 Local Area Hackney driver licence application is approved, An Garda Síochána will supply you with your Local Area Hackney 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 local area where you are allowed to operate. These cards confirm to customers that you are certified by NTA.

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 Local Area Hackney 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.

- For Local Area Hackney drivers, it shows the specific area where you can accept passengers.

SMART CARDS

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

LICENCE EXPIRY

SPSV DRIVER LICENCE

Local Area Hackney driver licences are valid for up to five years. Should you wish to continue operating in your area after this time, a full reapplication is required.

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 Local Area Hackney licence.



2.4 YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

SPSV DRIVER RIGHTS

As a licensed Local Area Hackney 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 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.
- › 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 person who attempts to hire the vehicle to transport goods without passengers.
- › 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

- › Local Area Hackneys must not charge more than the agreed fare.

RECEIPTS

A Local Area Hackney driver must make a written receipt available to the customer at the end of the journey. See *Chapter 6, Fares* for more details.



UNREASONABLE REFUSAL OF SERVICE

You cannot refuse service, except as outlined in your rights above.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- › You must have a good knowledge of local 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 7, *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.

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.
- › 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

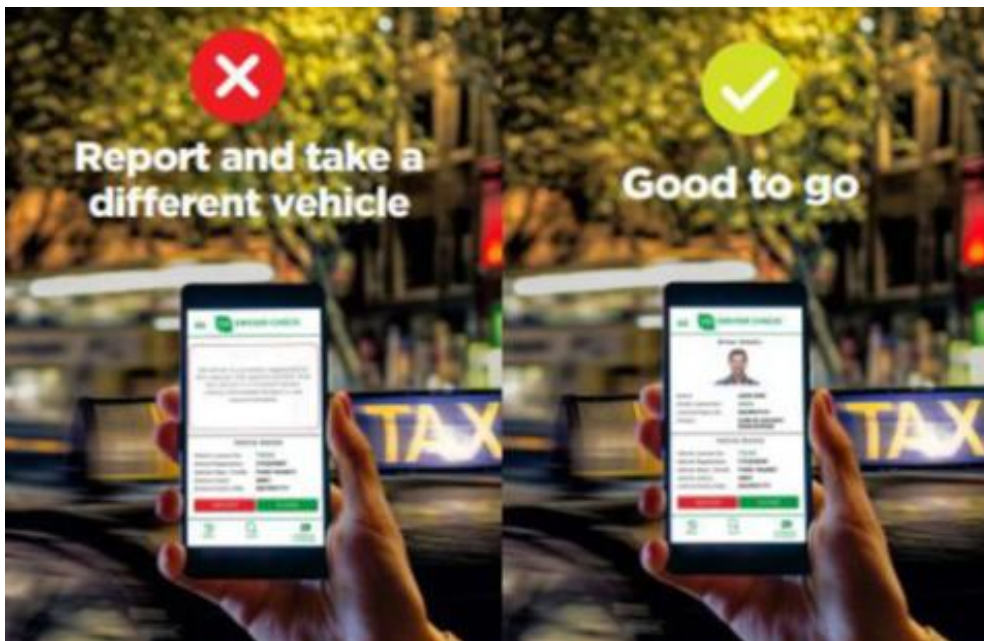
This is a safety app for passengers. The app shows a driver's name and the photo used in their licence application.

All active SPSV driver and vehicle licences, including Local Area Hackney, 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 Local Area Hackney driver and vehicle are licensed and on the SPSV Public Register.
- › Confirm that the Local Area Hackney driver is linked to the Local Area Hackney vehicle they are using.
- › Verify a Local Area Hackney 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 A LOCAL AREA HACKNEY

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Before buying a vehicle to use as a Local Area Hackney, make sure that it is suitable. NTA sets the minimum standards that must be met by all Local Area Hackney vehicles.

This chapter deals with the standards required for Local Area Hackney vehicles entering the industry for the first time, either on new Local Area Hackney licences or as replacement vehicles on existing Local Area Hackney licences.

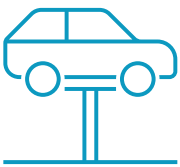
- › Vehicle standards for Local Area Hackneys
- › Roadworthiness
- › Vehicle suitability

3.1 VEHICLE STANDARDS FOR LOCAL AREA HACKNEYS

There are two types of standards for Local Area Hackneys.

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).

A Local Area Hackney must pass the National Car Test (NCT) roadworthiness test within 90 days prior to being licensed as a Local Area Hackney. 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 an SPSV.

NOTE

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

3.3 VEHICLE SUITABILITY

SUITABILITY STANDARDS

To make sure SPSVs, including Local Area Hackneys, are safe and comfortable, the 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 Local Area Hackneys must pass a suitability inspection before they can be licensed for the first time. This inspection must be done again when it is time to renew your Local Area Hackney licence, which is typically required annually. The rules for inspection can vary or change depending on when the licence was first issued.

The inspection looks at the vehicle’s specifications, features, age and condition.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

There are some general requirements that Local Area Hackneys must meet.

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

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

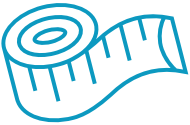


There are also specific technical requirements relating to the wheelbase, track width, side-to-side variation in wheelbases, tyre load rating and operation of the doors. These requirements are detailed in the Initial Suitability Inspection Manual.

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. For a Local Area Hackney the vehicle must be 10 years old or newer. This applies for application and renewal.

VEHICLE SIZE



Vehicles for Local Area 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.

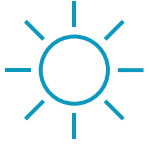
LUGGAGE AREA

Regulations for the luggage area in a Local Area Hackney 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 Local Area Hackney licences 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 a 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.

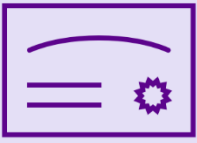
BULL BARS

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.

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.



CHAPTER 4: VEHICLE LICENSING

4

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter describes vehicle licensing procedures.

- › About the SPSV vehicle licence, including Local Area Hackney
- › Applying for a Local Area Hackney vehicle licence
- › Renewing a Local Area Hackney vehicle licence
- › Replacing an expired Local Area Hackney vehicle licence
- › Changing the vehicle on a Local Area Hackney vehicle licence
- › Surrendering a Local Area Hackney vehicle licence

4.1 ABOUT THE SPSV VEHICLE LICENCE, INCLUDING LOCAL AREA HACKNEY



If you want to use a vehicle as a Local Area Hackney 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 LOCAL AREA HACKNEY VEHICLE LICENCE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

What does the Local Area Hackney vehicle licence allow?

The licence lets a vehicle be used as a Local Area Hackney only.

How long does the licence last?

A Local Area Hackney vehicle licence can be valid for 12 months or until the vehicle reaches its age limit.

Can you change the vehicle on the Local Area Hackney 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 Local Area Hackney licence?

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

Can a Local Area Hackney vehicle be licensed as a different SPSV at the same time?

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

Can a company or a business transfer a Local Area Hackney vehicle licence to a different company?

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

Can the licence be sold?

No, a Local Area Hackney vehicle licence cannot be sold or transferred to another party.

4.2 APPLYING FOR A LOCAL AREA HACKNEY VEHICLE LICENCE

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

Step 1	Have your Local Area Hackney area approved.
Step 2	Get the right vehicle.
Step 3	Submit the application.
Step 4	Equip the vehicle in line with SPSV regulations.
Step 5	Get ready for the Initial Suitability Inspection.
Step 6	Submit the vehicle for its Initial Suitability Inspection.

STEP 1 – HAVE YOUR LOCAL AREA HACKNEY AREA APPROVED

In order to apply for a Local Area Hackney licence you must first identify the rural area you would like to operate. This can be done via the online Local Area Hackney application portal available on the NTA website.

STEP 2 - 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. *See further details in Chapter 3.*

STEP 3 – SUBMIT THE APPLICATION



To apply for a new vehicle licence, complete the Local Area Hackney application form (LAH26) sent to you by the NTA only after the Local Area Hackney area is approved.

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 LOCAL AREA HACKNEY LICENCE

If you are applying for a Local Area Hackney licence, you must include supporting written declarations via an approved template from four local business and organisations. It must be a mix of private and public services. Example of a private service might include a local pub, guesthouse, restaurant, nursing home or shop. A public service might include a charity (such as meals on wheels, Age Action etc...), recreational, social & hobby groups including community sports clubs (GAA, park runs), walking clubs, card playing groups (bridge), schools or religious centres.

THE FORM MUST INCLUDE:

- › Contact details for booking the vehicle, so that passengers who require the local hackney service can contact you. This will appear on the NTA and TFI website.

NOTE

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

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

Send your application and any necessary supporting documents to:

Taxis@nationaltransport.ie

Or

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



If all the necessary information is received, NTA will process your application. NTA can return any application that is not complete, valid 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.

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

Only one Local Area Hackney licence is permitted per area. The Local Area Hackney area applied for will be excluded from future applications for this 90-day period. Where the licence is granted, this will remain excluded to other applicants for the duration of that Local Area Hackney licence. Where the conditional offer is not completed within the 90-days the area will be released to allow other potential applicants apply to provide that service.



STEP 4 – GET READY FOR THE INITIAL SUITABILITY INSPECTION

ADVERTISING

Local Area Hackneys are required to advertise their community hackney service within their licensed area but not directly on the vehicle.







A Local Area Hackney cannot display any sign or advertisement unless it has been approved in writing by NTA.

No advertisement, sign, or symbol with offensive, discriminatory, obscene words or images should be displayed inside or outside of a Local Area Hackney.

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.

SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Local Area Hackneys 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.

DOCUMENTATION



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.

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 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.

CHANGING YOUR APPOINTMENT FOR VEHICLE LICENSING INSPECTION

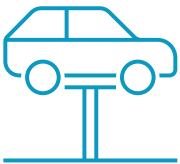


You can cancel or reschedule an appointment for a vehicle licensing inspection without charge up to two working days before the appointment.

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 Local Area Hackney Initial Suitability Inspection takes place at one of the vehicle licensing centres around the country.

- › 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.

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.

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

NOTE

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

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 Local Area Hackney 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*.

A Local Area Hackney licence certificate will be given to the person who brings the vehicle in for inspection.

A Local Area Hackney vehicle licence can last for one year 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 a Local Area Hackney without a valid licence. A conditional offer is not a licence to operate.

4.3 RENEWING A LOCAL AREA HACKNEY VEHICLE LICENCE

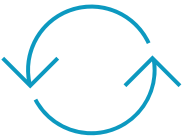
LICENCE VALIDITY

A Local Area Hackney vehicle licence is usually valid for 12 months from the date it is issued. If your vehicle is nearing its maximum age, the licence will last only until that age. For a Local Area Hackney this is usually the 10th ‘birthday’.

VALIDITY FOR LOCAL AREA HACKNEY LICENCES

A Local Area Hackney licence can only be renewed for up to five years from the date it was first issued.

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 Local Area Hackney vehicle, or you have a legal right to use the Local Area Hackney vehicle, such as under a lease or hire-purchase agreement.	3	You must provide confirmation of community support prior to each renewal. This will be in the same format as the original Local Area Hackney application which includes a mix of both private and public local organisations. These do not need to be the same business and organisations used in the original application, but they do need to operate in the Local Area Hackney area.
2	Your Local Area Hackney vehicle meets the age rules (10 years or newer).		

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 by the NTA in relation to your Local Area Hackney licence.

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

BOOKING YOUR ASSESSMENT



Book your Licence Renewal Assessment by calling 0818 064 000.

The appointment can only be made 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 Local Area Hackney 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 Local Area Hackney 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 Local Area Hackney 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 a Local Area Hackney. You will also be given a licence certificate.

4.4 REPLACING AN EXPIRED LOCAL AREA HACKNEY VEHICLE LICENCE

NOTE

Vehicle licences that are expired for more than 3 months cannot be replaced.

If your Local Area Hackney licence expires, you have up to 3 months from the expiry date to apply for a replacement. After this time, a full reapplication will be required if you wish to operate in the area again.

Local Area Hackney licences cannot be renewed or replaced more than 5 years after the date they were first issued. This is to allow for an ongoing needs assessment to be carried out on suitable Local Area Hackney areas. Operators can apply again based on the available areas at that time.

4.5 CHANGING THE VEHICLE ON A LOCAL AREA HACKNEY VEHICLE LICENCE

You can switch the vehicle on your Local Area Hackney 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 Local Area Hackney*.



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 G6
- › Initial Suitability Inspection Manual

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.

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.

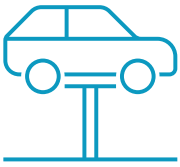
You must have the following things ready when calling to book the Initial Suitability Inspection for the replacement vehicle, as you will need to give the details over the phone:

- › 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.

4.6 SURRENDERING A LOCAL AREA HACKNEY 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.

- › Local Area Hackney vehicle requirements
- › Maintaining operational data
- › Operating sustainably in the SPSV industry
- › Keeping your Local Area Hackney vehicle in good condition
- › Compliance and following the rules
- › Fixed payment offences
- › Changing address or contact details on a licence

5.1 LOCAL AREA HACKNEY VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS

SPSV REGULATION COMPLIANCE

Any vehicle used as a Local Area Hackney must comply with the regulations. If a vehicle is used as a Local Area Hackney 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 LOCAL AREA HACKNEYS

All Local Area Hackneys must:

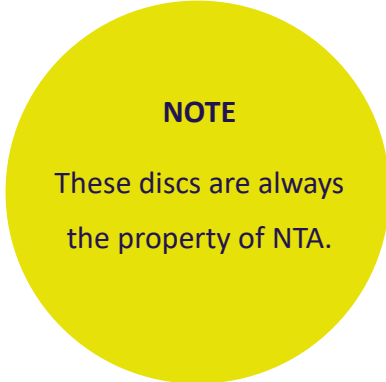
- › Have an active vehicle licence, shown on the tamper-proof licence discs.
- › Display tamper-proof licence discs in both the front and rear windows.
- › Be in good working condition/fully roadworthy. It is illegal to operate a faulty vehicle.
- › Carry required safety equipment. See *Chapter 3, Choosing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

TAMPER-PROOF LICENCE DISCS

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

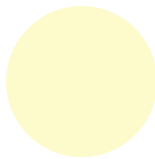
- › The vehicle licence number and expiry date.
- › The vehicle registration number, colour and type.
- › The number of passengers the vehicle is licensed to carry.

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.



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.**

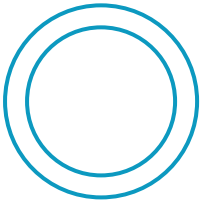


Silver for limousines.

Below is an example of a Local Area Hackney 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.

5.2 MAINTAINING OPERATIONAL DATA

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

Local Area Hackney drivers must notify the NTA whenever they start or take over operating their Local Area Hackney. A link can have an end date or be open-ended.

If you are the only Local Area Hackney driver associated with your Local Area Hackney, you only need to notify the NTA once about that vehicle. However, if the Local Area Hackney is driven by multiple Local Area Hackney drivers, each driver must advise the NTA every time they start operating that vehicle.

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

- › Before you start driving a Local Area Hackney
- › If you change your vehicle
- › If your Local Area Hackney 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 a Local Area 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.

NOTE

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

FURTHER INFORMATION

The NTA provides several ways for you to update 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.

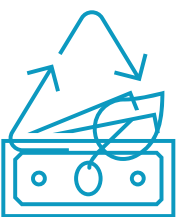
RULES OF LOCAL AREA HACKNEY OPERATION



Local Area Hackneys must:

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

5.3 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. 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.

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

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.

5.4 KEEPING YOUR LOCAL AREA HACKNEY VEHICLE IN GOOD CONDITION



To comply with regulations and provide a safe and comfortable service, you must keep your Local Area Hackney 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>.

5.5 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 5.11 *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 that your driver display card is clearly shown and that you have your ID card with you.
- › For a Local Area Hackney they will also check you are operating in the area you are approved to operate.

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.



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.

5.6 FIXED PAYMENT OFFENCES

These are the main fixed payment offences at the time of publication of this Manual that relate to Local Area Hackneys. 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	
Showing signs or ads on a hackney that are not allowed by the NTA.	€80
Not meeting the Local Area Hackney vehicle rules.	€100

STANDING OR PLYING FOR HIRE	
Local Area Hackney available for hire outside specified area.	€200

FARES AND CHARGES	
Refusing a short journey under 30km without good reason.	€150
Refusing to carry a guide dog or assistance dog.	€250
Not offering a receipt at the end of a hackney journey.	€100
Not carrying the required booking record for a hackney hire.	€80
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.



5.7 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.



CHAPTER 6: FARES

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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

- › Local Area Hackney fares
- › Getting paid
- › Staying compliant

6

6.1 LOCAL AREA HACKNEY FARES

Customers must pre-book Local Area Hackneys 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 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.

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

Local Area Hackney 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.

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

6.3 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 and you may have to pay a fixed payment penalty.



CHAPTER 7: DELIVERING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

7

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter deals with the subject of customer service.

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

7.1 NTA'S ROLE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

As a Local Area Hackney 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.



Local Area Hackney operators offer a special type of transport service. It is a public service that can operate at any time 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) Local Area Hackney database – allows local users to identify Local Area Hackneys in their area. The booking details provided by the licence holder will be available on this database.

7.2 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 a Local Area Hackney operator, this can reduce stress and help make your work more enjoyable.

Local Area Hackney 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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7.3 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

A Local Area Hackney 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

- › 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.

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.

TIP

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

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. Remind everyone to use their seatbelts.
5. 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. Local Area Hackney drivers – must provide a written receipt.
5. Offer a business card with your contact details to help secure repeat business.

2

ASSISTING THE CUSTOMER

1. 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.

7.4 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 Take your time and be patient. Allow extra time for getting in and out of the vehicle and for discussing the destination.

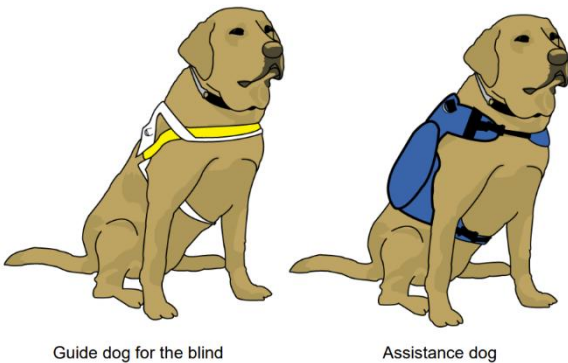
The National Disability Authority has suggestions on how to help customers with disabilities have a more comfortable journey. This is covered in the following section.

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, ASSISTANCE DOGS AND MOBILITY AIDS

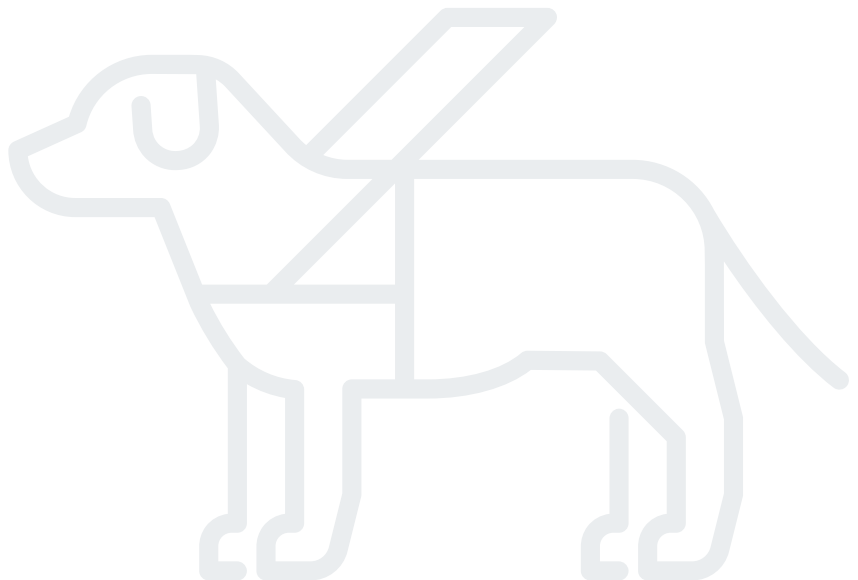
SPSV drivers must allow guide dogs, assistance dogs, or mobility aids in the vehicle.

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.
- ✓ 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 Even if the customer speaks through an interpreter, always address the customer directly, not the interpreter.	BE PATIENT 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.	BE CONSIDERATE 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.
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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.

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).

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.
- Undertake the NDAs e-learning module “Introduction to Disability Equality”:
<https://nda.ie/publications-and-resources/disability-equality-training>

7.5 DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY



EQUALITY LEGISLATION AND THE SPSV OPERATOR

As an SPSV operator, you have the right to be treated equally and with respect.

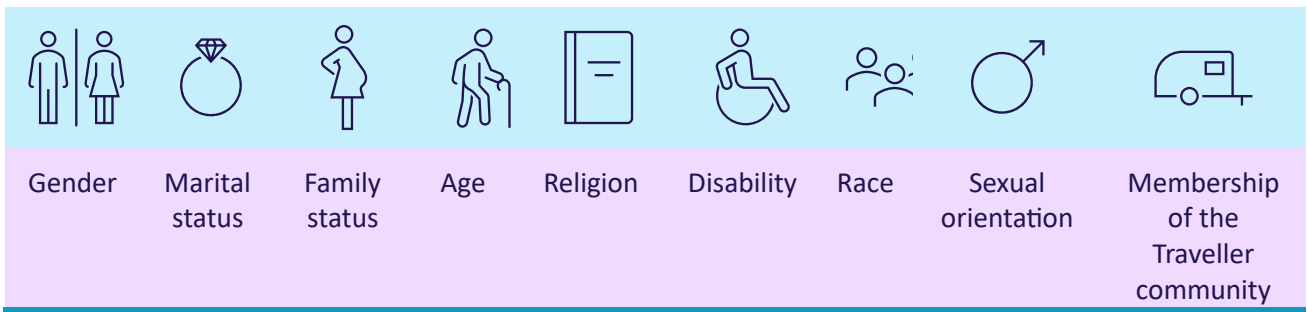
You also have the responsibility to treat all your customers equally and with respect. Treating customers well will make their journeys more pleasant and acting

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:

GROUNDINGS 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:



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.

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.

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.

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.

7.6 DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

Most customers are happy with their Local Area Hackney 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.

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.

7.7 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.

7.8 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	Kevin Street: (01) 6669400	Finglas: (01) 6667500
Shankill: (01) 6665900	Tallaght: (01) 6666000	



CHAPTER 8: YOUR SPSV BUSINESS

8

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter deals with what you need to know when you are operating an SPSV business.

- › Working in the SPSV industry
- › Creating a business plan
- › Running your own business
- › Promoting your business

8.1 WORKING IN THE SPSV INDUSTRY

TAX AND COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

To obtain or renew any Local Area Hackney licence 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.

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.

8.2 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:

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.

- › 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?
- › What are your busiest areas and times? Can you create more opportunities and build on them?
- › What do different types of customers want?

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

WHAT FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS ARE THERE?

Before you start your Local Area Hackney business, you should 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.

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.

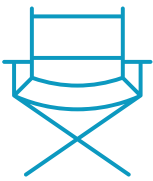
SEEK PROFESSIONAL FINANCIAL ADVICE

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.

8.3 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.
- › 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.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

RENEWAL DATES

- › 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 Local Area Hackney 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.

8.4 PROMOTING YOUR BUSINESS



Whatever type of SPSV business you decide to do you will need to plan how to promote your service. Local Area Hackney operators must advertise in the area they operate, this is a requirement of the licence so you should consider where would be best to place your advertisements, so the community are aware of the service and how to book it.

Doing 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

Here are some common ways to advertise and promote your business:

<p>One of the best forms of advertising is a satisfied customer. A happy customer will recommend you to others at no cost to you.</p>	<p>Telling everyone you know about your business and asking them to support you and spread the word.</p>	<p>Partnering with local businesses, who can recommend your service to their customers.</p>
<p>Handing out business cards / contact details to encourage customers to call you again.</p>	<p>Supporting or sponsoring local events and charities, which can raise your profile in the community.</p>	<p>Advertising in local shops, pubs, restaurants and B&Bs, post office notice boards, community centres and health / GP offices.</p>

BUILDING BUSINESS WITH EXISTING CUSTOMERS

Excellent customer satisfaction is an important part of your brand. See *Chapter 7, Delivering customer satisfaction*. It is important to think about how to build a group of customers who will call you first when they need a Local Area Hackney ride.

If you always meet their needs and never let them down, they are more likely to stay loyal to you.



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.



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 which means this cannot be used in any Local Area Hackney advertising.



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.

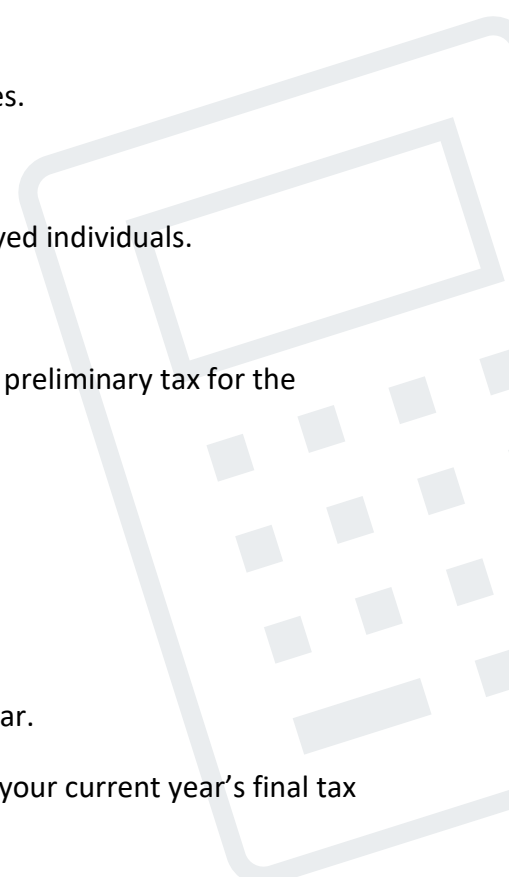
You can also pay any balances due for the previous year and any preliminary tax for the current year.

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.

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

www.revenue.ie

forms you need to register your business for tax are also downloadable from there.

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.

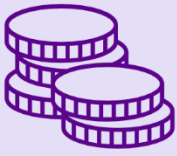
www.localenterprise.ie

The 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 9: STAYING SAFE

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

9.1 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.

KEY NTA SAFETY REGULATIONS

- ✓ Refusal of service – Local Area Hackney 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 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.

9.2 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 a Local Area Hackney 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 a Local Area Hackney 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.

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.

- › Keep to the legal speed limits and leave enough space between you and the car in front of you.

PENALTY POINTS AND INSURANCE

Poor driving can lead to penalty points.

Penalty points are a bigger problem for Local Area Hackney drivers than for regular drivers because they make your insurance more expensive and can result in you losing your licence.

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.



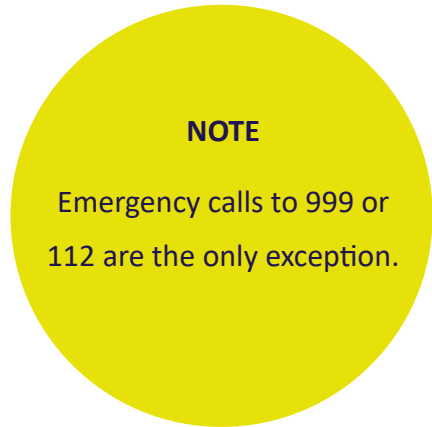
MOBILE PHONES

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.



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.



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.

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 Local Area Hackney to ensure no one smokes in the vehicle.

If your vehicle is not taxed as a Local Area Hackney, 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

An adult passenger is responsible for wearing a seatbelt. As a driver you should remind them, 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 a Local Area Hackney. 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.

9.3 LOOKING AFTER YOUR PERSONAL SECURITY

As a Local Area Hackney operator, the nature of your work brings some special risks.

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.



REDUCING THE RISK OF ROBBERY

As a Local Area Hackney 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.

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.



As explained in *Chapter 3, Choosing a vehicle to use as a Local Area Hackney*, 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.

9.4 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/>.

9.5 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 a Local Area Hackney 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 Local Area Hackney drivers are encouraged to take an in-person handling course from a professional organisation.

Before lifting any item, think carefully.

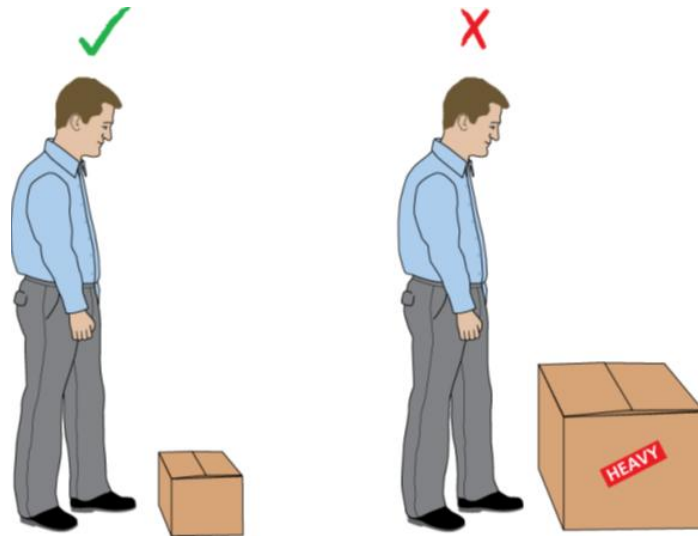
- › Can you safely load it into your vehicle?
- › Will carrying or transporting the item cause a health or safety risk to you, your passenger, or other people?

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.

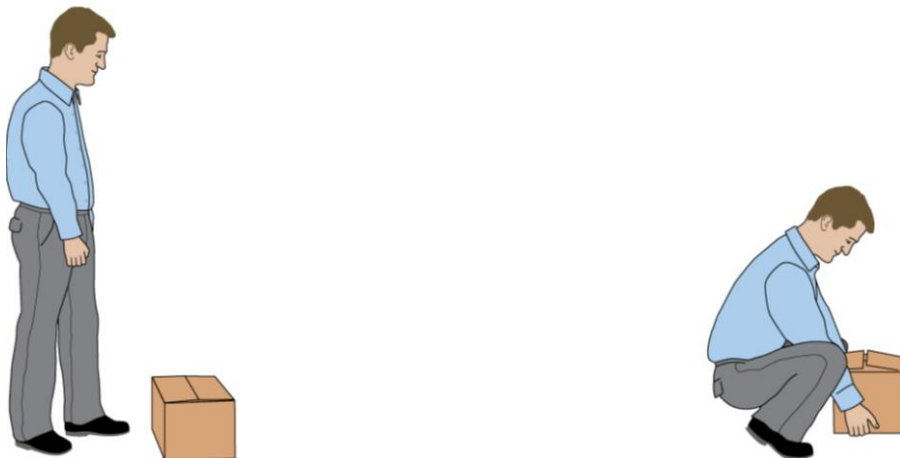
SOME GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING HEAVY OR BULKY ITEMS

The Health and Safety Authority offers some guidelines to help 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.

9.6 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.

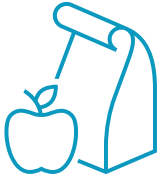
HEALTH AND WELFARE

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.