

Changes to conduct regulations of drivers, inspectors, conductors and passengers

A guide for bus and coach staff

If you're a bus driver or conductor you need to be aware of new duties that affect you and your work.

The new duties were introduced on 1 October 2002 after changes to the Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and Passengers Regulations. This leaflet gives information about the new duties and what they mean for you.

Who is affected by these changes?

The main changes affect drivers and conductors. With the exception of carrying guide, hearing and assistance dogs, the Regulations only apply when you're working on a vehicle that meets requirements for access for disabled people under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The requirements state that from 31 December 2000 new large single and double deck buses that can carry more than 22 passengers need to be accessible to disabled people, including wheelchair users. For new coaches and smaller buses the requirement for wheelchair access applies from 1 January 2005. However, it is good practice for you to follow the rules for all vehicles wherever possible.

Having the right vehicle is only part of the solution for disabled passengers. It's also important to recognise and understand the needs of disabled passengers.

So you need to have the right information and the right training. You can make a big difference to a disabled passenger - and you'll find that it makes your job easier too.

How do the changes affect me?

Assistance dogs

From 1 October 2002, whatever type or age of bus or coach you're working on, you must allow disabled people to board with their assistance dogs. It's easy to recognise assistance dogs from the jackets they wear with the name of the charity that trained them, or by the distinctive harnesses that guide dogs wear.

There is no limit to the number of assistance dogs that you should allow to travel on the bus at one time.

You can tell the owner to move a dog if it's blocking a gangway, but most dogs will go under the seat or sit at their owner's feet.

Wheelchair users

Accessible buses will be fitted with a boarding device to help wheelchair users to get on or off. These can be a lift, a powered or manually operated ramp, or a portable ramp.

- You may need tools to fit the ramp (or to operate a powered ramp or lift if the power fails). These tools should also be carried on the bus.
- Whatever type of lift or ramp is provided you should make sure you know how to use it. If you have a portable ramp you must make sure it's carried on the bus and know how to fit it.

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- You must make a boarding device available when a disabled person wants to get on or off. If you're using a portable ramp, make sure it's positioned correctly and any safety locks are in place. If you're using a lift, you'll need to check handrails and ensure that other safety devices such as lift roll-off stops are put in place.
- You must also get as close to the kerb as you can and deploy the lift or ramp onto the pavement. If that isn't possible, you should ensure that you have stopped the bus in a position that is safe for the wheelchair user to get off.
- You must always ensure that the lift or ramp is secured in its correct stowage position before the vehicle is driven. Power operated ramps will usually return to a safe stowage position automatically.

Wheelchair space

You **must** allow a wheelchair user to board the bus when the wheelchair space is unoccupied. The only exception is if the person's wheelchair is too large or if you think it's unsuitable to have on board your bus. For example, if the battery on an electric wheelchair is leaking acid.

Where other passengers are occupying the wheelchair space you should ask them to move to allow a wheelchair user to board. You do not have to let the wheelchair user on if the carrying capacity - seated or standing - would then be exceeded. Other passengers on the bus aren't obliged to move, and you're not expected to make them.

Wheelchair users should be able to get on and off without your help on most buses.

You must make sure a wheelchair user can get in and out of the wheelchair space easily. If a moveable seat or retractable handrail is in the way you should either fold it away or remove it. It's important for the safety of all passengers that the person in the wheelchair is correctly and safely positioned into the wheelchair space.

The wheelchair space will either be forward or rear facing, depending on the type of vehicle.

A forward facing space will have wheelchair restraints. This is usually webbing or clamps which attach to the wheelchair frame. Before driving off you must make sure the restraints are correctly attached according to the instructions.

A forward facing wheelchair space will also have a passenger restraint which looks very similar to a seat belt. There is currently no legal requirement for this to be worn by the wheelchair user. But it's good practice to encourage its use and you must offer to assist the wheelchair user to do so. There should be instructions on the bus, but these restraints usually operate in the same way as a seat belt. Make sure it isn't held away from the passenger by parts of the wheelchair. You may have to pass the restraint through the arms of the wheelchair to ensure it's positioned correctly.

If there is a retractable handrail (or something similar) you must put it in place before moving off. This stops the wheelchair moving sideways in a rearward facing wheelchair space.

You must respond to the wheelchair user's signal telling you that they want to get off.

If you have to remove seats to accommodate wheelchair users, you must stow those seats safely and securely.

Helping disabled passengers

You must, wherever reasonable, assist a wheelchair user or other disabled person if they ask you. This will give the passenger both confidence and reassurance, especially when they're travelling by bus for the first time. It will also reduce the time it takes them to get on or off, helping you to run to time.

Kneeling your bus and using additional steps

You must kneel your bus or get out the folding (or retractable) step if someone asks you to, or if you think they may need it.

It may be difficult to tell who might need such assistance to board, so it's much better if you can kneel the bus at each stop. Doing this will help not only disabled people, but also other passengers to get on and off more easily.

Remember, if it's quicker for them then it will also help you. Occasionally you might not be able to kneel your bus if, for example, it would cause damage to the bus, or the bus is alongside a high kerb. As long as there is good reason for you not to operate it, this is acceptable, but it is helpful to explain the reason why to the passenger.

Doors

Where there are two doors, passengers will usually enter by the front door and leave by the centre or rear one. Under the new rules, you **must** allow disabled passengers to enter and leave by the same door and their preference may be to use the front one. The most convenient door may be the one with the ramp or kneeling system fitted. You may need to allow disabled passengers a little extra time, especially if they are going against the flow of passengers, so please be patient.

When equipment fails

As you can see, some of your duties towards disabled passengers mean that you have to use equipment fitted or carried on the bus. You **must not** let a disabled person get on, travel, or get off the bus if a fault or failure of the equipment means it's unsafe for them to do so. You can, of course, use manual back up systems that are provided in case of a power failure. If the equipment fails but it's still safe to operate them they may continue to be used. You should check with your employer about the circumstances in which the equipment is safe to use.

The equipment should be checked daily to make sure it's working. If you report faults quickly this will help to make sure the equipment is available when needed, avoid complaints from passengers and help to prevent problems arising during a journey.

Route and destination displays

The correct route number (if any) and destination **must** be displayed on the vehicle and **must** be illuminated between sunset and sunrise. Where it isn't possible to display the route destination in the usual way, for example on a temporary route, then a temporary sign should be displayed on the front or near-side of the bus, as near as possible to the front door. These temporary signs don't need to be illuminated at night.

Limitations to drivers' duties

As mentioned already the new rules mean you should kneel your bus, use a folding or retractable step, lift or ramp and assist your disabled passengers. There may however, be circumstances where carrying out those duties will risk the health and safety of the disabled person, other passengers, yourself or the security of the vehicle. In those circumstances it will be for you to weigh-up whether it's reasonable for you to carry out a particular duty. If you decide to refuse, you'll want to be sure that you have good reasons for doing so if you want to avoid action being taken against you or your company to enforce the Regulations.

Where can I get more information?

Contact:

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This leaflet is a summary of the new requirements. You should check with your employer for full details.

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