

Motor caravans – changes to construction requirements from 29 April 2012

Statement

This document provides general guidance and advice on the legislative requirements in Great Britain relating to motor caravans – changes to construction requirements from 29 April 2012.

Every effort has been made to ensure that it is factually correct but recipients should check with the producers of this document if they have reason to believe any part is not correct or is now out of date.

General requirements

Construction and Use, and Lighting Regulations

All motor caravans (also known as camper vans, motor homes, recreational vehicles) used on the road must comply with various rules about their construction. The two most pertinent regulations are listed in a document produced by the DfT: **GB Road vehicle regulations**. To summarise, the motor caravan must be safe, in that it must be well-engineered so that it is not likely to fall apart or otherwise cause danger to other road users.

In addition, from **29 April 2012** onwards, new motor caravans have been required to be **approved**. This means that a government agency will need to sanction the design of new motor caravans before sales can begin.

Existing motor caravans, already registered with the DVLA, are not affected by **approval**. Likewise, conversions of registered panel vans into motor caravans are not affected by **approval**. However it remains the responsibility of the manufacturer/converter to produce a safe vehicle.

There seems to be a misconception circulating about a requirement for “crash tested” beds or seats. This is not the case. The rules on MOT testing (annual test) are **not** changing. Only the rules applicable to the construction of **new** vehicles are changing.

Obtaining approval

Most motor caravans will need to be **type approved**. ‘Type approval’ is obtained from the *Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA)* and involves an assessment of certain aspects of the motor caravan design, inspection of a prototype and assessment of the production facility. This must all take place before production starts.

Alternatively, motor caravans built or imported in low numbers can be assessed individually after they have been built or imported. This is done by the *Vehicle & Operator Services Agency (VOSA)*, under an **Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA)** inspection. In this scenario every single motor caravan produced must be taken to a VOSA test station and inspected.

The choice of whether to use type approval or IVA is for the manufacturer, and should be made based on expected production volumes, expected markets (UK or overseas), costs of the schemes and other factors.

Seats

For a vehicle subject to type approval, all seats intended to be occupied by a passenger when the vehicle is travelling on the road will need to be type approved, and this will apply to a seat which is capable of conversion into a bed. There are no requirements for testing a fixed bed nor seats which are not intended for use whilst the vehicle is travelling on the road. As such, these will not offer a safe travelling solution for vehicle occupants and we would advise against their use unless the vehicle is stationary.

Importing a motor caravan

Motor caravans imported into the UK and previously registered in Europe will be accepted onto the UK register by DVLA upon presentation of the foreign registration document and supporting documents. An MOT will be required.

Motor caravans imported into the UK from outside Europe (e.g. America) will require an IVA before registration, unless they are over 10 years old, in which case only an MOT is required.

If the vehicle is *left hand drive*, modifications to the headlamps (they should dip to the left) and speedometer (must read in both mph and km/h) will be necessary. Normally the headlamps should be changed for a pair suitable for the UK. (Black stickers are not acceptable). The speedometer can be changed for a UK-spec speedo, or adapted by addition of a home-made scale. A dealership or garage can do the work but you are advised to shop around.

More information

VCA and *type approval* - www.vca.gov.uk

www.businesslink.gov.uk/vehicleapprovalschemes

VOSA and *Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA)* - <http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/iva>

Trade Associations SMMT, VBRA and NCC supply advice to their members:

<http://www.smmt.co.uk/home.cfm>

<http://www.vbra.co.uk/>

<http://www.nationalcaravan.co.uk/home/index.asp>

Further Information

If you require any further information regarding the content of this information sheet, please contact the DfT at the address below:

International Vehicle Standards
Department for Transport
Zone 1/33
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Telephone: 020 7944 2091

Email: TTS.enquiries@dft.gsi.gov.uk

NOTE: The information in this document is a summary of DfT's understanding of what the law requires. However, ultimately the interpretation of the law is a matter for the courts based on individual facts of any particular case. You are therefore advised to consult the relevant legislation and, if necessary, seek independent advice.

If you would like to purchase printed copies, Statutory Instruments are available to purchase from TSO:

The Stationery Office

Tel: 0870 600 5522

TSO Orders/Post Cash Dept

online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

PO Box 29

Norwich

NR3 1GN

Alternatively you can consult consolidated versions such as "*The Encyclopaedia of Road Traffic Law and Practice*" published by Sweet and Maxwell. Such publications are continually updated and are available in most city reference libraries.

EU Directives can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/automotive/documents/directives/index_en.htm

(The above lists all Directives pertaining to road and agricultural vehicles)

UN-ECE Regulations can be found at: <http://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp29/wp29regs.html>

Paper copies of Directives can be ordered from TSO or from the Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA): Tel: +44 (0)117 952 4178 / 4143 or email to: vista@vca.gov.uk