



»» MOVING ON »»

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The newsletter for HGV and PSV operators

Stretch limousines accepted for COIF

A Certificate of Initial Fitness (COIF) has recently been awarded to a large stretch limo for the first time. This means that PSV operators can now legally run limos carrying more than eight passengers. Examiner Allan Pratt tells us more.



How did this come about?

A company based in the south decided to address the stretch limousine issue in compliance with all of the regulations for certification as PSVs. To achieve certification of their Ford Excursion, the company needed to address numerous areas of non-compliance with British and European requirements. These included:

- braking systems;
- noise;
- window glass;
- lighting systems;
- seatbelts and their installation;
- emergency exits; and
- turning circle requirements.

All of this cost the company several hundred thousand pounds in research and development.

Where the money went

Modifications on braking systems and noise levels, seatbelts and anchorages had to be carried out. American approvals were analysed and, where their standards differed from the European standards, the necessary tests were carried out by the Vehicle Certification Agency. Ultimately, this resulted in approvals being issued for the vehicle in these areas.

New glass had to be manufactured for the windows. These were of the correct specifications to satisfy the requirements and carried identification markings as evidence of compliance.

Lamps and lenses for the front and rear lamps, brake lights, rear fog lights, headlights and direction indicators had to be obtained or manufactured. Again, identification markings were needed on the lenses as evidence of compliance with the requirements of the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989.

The emergency door, which must be located on the offside or at the rear of the vehicle, was also subjected to modifications so that it opened to the correct extent and had sufficient illumination at its step.

Turning on a spot

One of the most difficult modifications that had to be carried out was to enable the vehicle to meet the turning circle requirements for buses. This is laid out in Regulation 13 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986.

According to this regulation, a bus is required to manoeuvre in the area between two concentric circles of 5.3 metre and 12.5 metre diameters, so that no part of it projects outside that area. To achieve this, extensive modifications had to be made to the steering components so that the steering lock was effectively increased but no part of the front wheels or steering linkage came into contact with surrounding parts of the vehicle. Simultaneously, the steering geometry still had to allow the front wheels to turn at the correct angle in relation to each other so that there was no excessive tyre scrub and control of the vehicle was not affected.

The result

VOSA inspected the vehicle and associated evidence and issued a COIF on 25 May 2006. This is the first stretch limo legally allowed to carry 13 passengers, satisfying keen public demand.

VOSA

Vehicle & Operator Services Agency