
STATUTORY RULES OF NORTHERN IRELAND

1999 No. 454

**Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use)
Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999**

Part II

Construction, Equipment and Maintenance of Vehicles

I—

Protective Systems

Seat belts

- 55.**—(1) This regulation applies to a vehicle to which regulation 54 applies.
- (2) Subject to paragraph (5) a vehicle to which—
- (a) this regulation applies which was first used before 1st April 1981 shall be fitted with—
 - (i) a body-restraining belt, designed for use by an adult, for the driver's seat; and
 - (ii) a body-restraining belt for the specified passenger's seat (if any);
 - (b) this regulation applies which is first used on or after 1st April 1981 shall be fitted with three-point belts for the driver's seat and for the specified passenger's seat (if any);
 - (c) regulation 54(4)(a)(ii) or (iii) applies which is first used on or after 1st April 1987 shall be fitted with seat belts additional to those required by sub-paragraph (b) as follows—
 - (i) for a forward-facing front seat alongside the driver's seat, not being a specified passenger's seat, a seat belt which is a three-point belt, or a lap belt installed in accordance with paragraph 3.1.2. 1 of Annex I to Community Directive 77/541 or a disabled person's belt;
 - (ii) in the case of a passenger or dual-purpose vehicle having not more than two forward-facing seats behind the driver's seat with either—
 - (A) an inertia reel belt for at least one of those seats, or
 - (B) a three-point belt, a lap belt, a disabled person's belt or a child restraint for each of those seats;
 - (iii) in the case of a passenger or dual-purpose vehicle having more than two forward-facing seats behind the driver's seat, with either—
 - (A) an inertia reel belt for one of those seats nearest either side of the vehicle and a three-point belt, a lap belt, a disabled person's belt or a child restraint for at least one other of those seats;
 - (B) a three-point belt for one of those seats and either a child restraint or a disabled person's belt for at least one other of those seats; or

- (C) a three-point belt, a lap belt, a disabled person's belt or a child restraint for each of those seats;
- (d) regulation 54(4)(a)(i)(B) applies shall be fitted with seat belts as follows—
- (i) for the driver's seat and the specified passenger's seat (if any) a three-point belt; and
 - (ii) for any forward-facing front seat which is not a specified passenger's seat, a three-point belt or a lap belt installed in accordance with the provisions of sub-paragraph (c)(i);
- (e) regulation 54(5)(b) applies shall be equipped with seat belts which shall be three-point belts, lap belts or disabled person's belts.
- (3) Where a lap belt is fitted to a forward-facing front seat of a minibus, a motor ambulance or a motor caravan, or to an exposed forward-facing seat (other than the driver's seat or any crew seat) of a coach either—
- (i) there shall be provided padding to a depth of not less than 50 mm, on that part of the surface or edge of any bar, or the top or edge of any screen or partition, which would be likely to be struck by the head of a passenger wearing the lap belt in the event of an accident; or
 - (ii) the technical and installation requirements of Annex 4 to ECE Regulation 21 shall be met, in respect of any such bar, screen or partition,
- but nothing in sub-paragraph (i) shall require padding to be provided on any surface more than 1m from the centre of the line of intersection of the seat cushion and the back rest or more than 150 mm on either side of the longitudinal vertical plane which passes through the centre of that line, nor shall it require padding to be provided on any instrument panel of a minibus.
- (4) A seat belt for an adult, other than a disabled person's belt, provided for a vehicle in accordance with paragraph (2)(b), (c), (d) or (e) shall, except as provided in paragraph (7), comply with the installation requirements specified in paragraph 3.2.2 to 3.3.4 of Annex I to Community Directive 77/541 or 82/319 or 90/628 whether or not those Directives apply to the vehicle.
- (5) The requirements specified in paragraph (2) do not apply—
- (a) to a vehicle while it is being used under a trade licence issued under section 11 of the 1994 Act;
 - (b) to a vehicle, not being a vehicle to which the Northern Ireland Regulations apply, whilst it is being driven from premises of the manufacturer by whom it was made, or of a distributor of vehicles or dealer in vehicles—
 - (i) to premises of a distributor of or dealer in vehicles or of the purchaser of the vehicle, or
 - (ii) to premises of a person obtaining possession of the vehicle under a hiring agreement or hire-purchase agreement;
 - (c) in relation to any seat for which there is fitted—
 - (i) a seat belt which bears a mark including the specification number of the British Standard for Passive Belt Systems, namely BS AU 183: 1983 and including the registered certification trade mark of the British Standards Institution;
 - (ii) a seat belt designed for use by an adult which is a harness belt comprising a lap belt and shoulder straps which bears a British Standard mark or a mark including the specification number for the British Standard for Seat Belt Assemblies for Motor Vehicles, namely BS 3254: 1960 or BS 3254: Part 1: 1988 and including the registered certification trade mark of the British Standards Institution, or the marking designated as an approval mark by regulation 4 of the Approval Marks Regulations and shown at item 16 or 16A in Schedule 2 to those Regulations;

- (iii) a seat belt which satisfies the requirements of a standard corresponding to the British Standard referred to in sub-paragraph (i); or
 - (iv) a seat belt designed for use by an adult which is a harness belt comprising a lap belt and shoulder straps and which satisfies the requirements of a standard corresponding to any of the British Standards referred to in sub-paragraph (ii);
- (d) in relation to the driver's seat or the specified passenger's seat (if any) of a vehicle which has been specially designed and constructed, or specially adapted, for the use of a person suffering from some physical defect or disability, in a case where a disabled person's belt for an adult person is fitted for use for that seat;
- (e) to a vehicle to which regulation 54(5)(a) applies.
- (6) A seat belt provided in pursuance of paragraph (2) shall be properly secured to the anchorage points provided for it in accordance with regulation 54, or, in the case of a child restraint, to anchorages specially provided for it or, in the case of a disabled person's belt, secured to the vehicle or to the seat which is being occupied by the person wearing the belt.
- (7) Paragraph (4), insofar as it relates to the second paragraph of paragraph 3.3.2 of the Annex there mentioned (which concerns the locking or releasing of a seat belt by a single movement) does not apply in respect of a seat belt fitted for—
- (a) a seat which is treated as a specified passenger's seat by virtue of the provisions of (ii) in the definition of "specified passenger's seat" in paragraph (11); or
 - (b) any forward-facing seat for a passenger alongside the driver's seat of a goods vehicle which has an unladen weight of more than 915 kg and has more than one such seat, any such seats for passengers being joined together in a single structure; or
 - (c) any seat (other than the driver's seat) fitted to a coach.
- (8) A seat belt, other than a disabled person's belt or a seat belt of a kind mentioned in paragraph (5)(c), provided for any person in a vehicle to which this regulation applies shall be legibly and permanently marked—
- (a) if the vehicle was first used before 1st April 1981 or if the belt is a child restraint, with a British Standard mark or a designated approval mark; or
 - (b) in any other case, with a designated approval mark.
- Provided this paragraph shall not operate so as to invalidate the exception permitted in paragraph (7).
- (9) Paragraph (8) does not apply to—
- (a) a seat belt for an adult provided for a person in a vehicle first used before 1st April 1981 being a seat belt that satisfies the requirements of a standard corresponding to either of the British Standards referred to in sub-paragraph (i)(a) of the definition of "British Standard mark" in paragraph (11); or
 - (b) a child restraint that satisfies the requirements of a standard corresponding to any of the British Standards referred to in sub-paragraph (i)(b) of that definition.
- (10) For the purposes of this regulation a reference to a standard corresponding to a specified British Standard is a reference to—
- (a) a standard or code of practice of a national standards body or equivalent body of any EEA State;
 - (b) any international standard recognised for use as a standard by any EEA State; or
 - (c) a technical specification recognised for use as a standard by a public authority of any EEA State,

where the standard, code of practice, international standard or technical specification provides in relation to seat belts, a level of safety equivalent to that provided by the British Standard and contains a requirement as respects the marking of seat belts equivalent to that provided by the British Standard.

(11) In this regulation—

“body-restraining belt” means a seat belt designed to provide restraint for both the upper and lower parts of the trunk of the wearer in the event of an accident to the vehicle;

“British Standard mark” means a mark consisting of—

- (i) the specification number of one of the following British Standards for Seat Belt Assemblies for Motor Vehicles, namely—
 - (a) if it is a seat belt for an adult, BS 3254: 1960 or BS 3254: Part 1: 1988 BS AU 160a or 160b; or
 - (b) if it is a child restraint, BS 3254: 1960 or BS 3254: 1960 as amended by Amendment No. 16 published on 31st July 1986 under the number AMD 5210, BS 3254: Part 2: 1988 or BS 3254: Part 2: 1991BS AU 157 or 157a, BS AU 185, BS AU 186 or 186a, BS AU 202 or BS/AU 202a and, in either case,
 - (ii) the registered certification trade mark of the British Standards Institution;

“child restraint” means a seat belt for the use of a young person which is designed either to be fitted directly to a suitable anchorage or to be used in conjunction with a seat belt for an adult and held in place by the restraining action of that belt.

Provided that for the purposes of paragraph (2)(c)(ii)(B) and (2)(c)(iii) it means only such seat belts fitted directly to a suitable anchorage and excludes belts marked with the specification numbers BS AU 185 and BS AU 186 or 186a;

“crew seat” means a seat fitted to a vehicle and intended for use by crew (other than the driver), including any arm rests and foot rests with which the vehicle is fitted in relation to the seat;

“designated approval mark” means—

- (i) if it is a seat belt other than a child restraint, the marking designated as an approval mark by regulation 4 of the Approval Marks Regulations and shown at item 16 and 16A of Schedule 2 to those Regulations or the marking designated as an approval mark by regulation 5 of those Regulations and shown at items 23 and 23A(1) in Schedule 4 to those Regulations, and
- (ii) if it is a child restraint, any of the markings designated as approval marks by regulation 4 of those Regulations and shown at item 44, 44A and 44B in Schedule 2 to those Regulations;

“disabled person’s belt” means a seat belt which has been specially designed or adapted for use by an adult or young person suffering from some physical defect or disability and which is intended for use solely by such a person;

“exposed forward-facing seat” means—

- (i) a forward-facing front seat (including any crew seat) and the driver’s seat; and
- (ii) any other forward-facing seat which is not immediately behind and on the same horizontal plane as a forward-facing high-backed seat;

“forward-facing front seat” means—

- (i) any forward-facing seat alongside the driver’s seat; or
- (ii) if the vehicle normally has no seat which is a forward-facing front seat under subparagraph (1), each forward-facing seat for a passenger which is foremost in the vehicle;

“forward-facing high-backed seat” means a forward-facing seat which is also a high-backed seat;

“forward-facing seat” means a seat which is attached to a vehicle so that it faces towards the front of the vehicle in such a manner that a line passing through the centre of both the front and the back of the seat is at an angle of 30° or less to the longitudinal axis of the vehicle;

“high-backed seat” means a seat the highest part of which is at least 1m above the deck of the vehicle;

“inertia reel belt” means a three-point belt of either of the types required for a front seating position nearest either side of the vehicle by paragraph 3.1.1 of Annex I to Community Directive 77/541;

“lap belt” means a seat belt which passes across the front of the wearer’s pelvic region and which is designed for use by an adult;

“seat” includes any part designed for the accommodation of one adult or a continuous seat designed for the accommodation of more than one adult;

“seat belt” means a belt intended to be worn by a person in a vehicle and designed to prevent or lessen injury to its wearer in the event of an accident to the vehicle and includes, in the case of a child restraint, any special chair to which the belt is attached;

“specified passenger’s seat” means—

- (i) in the case of a vehicle which has one forward-facing front seat alongside the driver’s seat, that seat, and in the case of a vehicle which has more than one such seat, the one furthest from the driver’s seat; or
- (ii) if the vehicle normally has no seat which is the specified passenger’s seat under subparagraph (i) the forward-facing front seat for a passenger which is foremost in the vehicle and furthest from the driver’s seat, unless there is a fixed partition separating that seat from the space in front of it alongside the driver’s seat; and

“three-point belt” means a seat belt which—

- (i) restrains the upper and lower parts of the torso;
- (ii) includes a lap belt;
- (iii) is anchored at not less than three points; and
- (iv) is designed for use by an adult.