
STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2001 No. 561

**The Road Vehicles (Display of
Registration Marks) Regulations 2001**

PART II

REGISTRATION PLATES

Interpretation of Part II

4. In this Part the following expressions shall have the following meanings—

“diagonal length”, in relation to a relevant area, means the length of a line drawn diagonally across the square enclosing the area (so that the extent of the relevant area is thereby delimited);

“relevant area”, in relation to a registration plate, means the area contained in a square described on the ground—

- (a) in front of the vehicle in the case of a plate fixed on the front of the vehicle, and
- (b) behind the vehicle in the case of a plate fixed on the rear of the vehicle,

where one corner of the square is immediately below the middle of the plate and the diagonal of the square from that corner is parallel to the longitudinal axis of the vehicle;

“relevant type-approval directive” means—

- (a) in the case of a motor cycle, motor tricycle or quadricycle—
 - (i) Council Directive [93/94/EEC\(1\)](#) (as amended by Commission Directive [99/26/EC\(2\)](#)) as regards the space to be provided for fixing of the rear registration plate, and
 - (ii) Council Directive [93/92/EEC\(3\)](#) as regards the rear registration plate lamp;
- (b) in the case of any other vehicle or a trailer—
 - (i) Council Directive [70/222/EEC\(4\)](#) as regards the space to be provided for fixing of the rear registration plate, and
 - (ii) Council Directive [76/760/EEC\(5\)](#) (as amended by Commission Directive [97/31/EC\(6\)](#)) as regards the rear registration plate lamp.

Fixing of rear registration plates: vehicles registered on or after the relevant date

5.—(1) This regulation applies to vehicles, other than works trucks, road rollers and agricultural machines, first registered on or after the relevant date.

(1) OJNo. L311, 14.12.93, p. 83.
(2) OJ No. L118, 6.5.99, p. 32.
(3) OJ No. L331, 14.12.93, p. 1.
(4) OJ No. L75, 6.4.70, p. 25.
(5) OJ No. L262, 27.9.76, p. 85.
(6) OJ No. L171, 30.6.97, p. 49.

(2) A registration plate must be fixed on the rear of—

- (a) the vehicle, or
- (b) where the vehicle is towing a trailer, the trailer, or
- (c) where the vehicle is towing more than one trailer, the rearmost trailer.

(3) Where a vehicle (or, in a case where the plate is required to be fixed on a trailer, that trailer) has been constructed so as to satisfy the requirements of the relevant type-approval directive, whether or not it is required by law to satisfy them, the plate may be fixed in the space provided in accordance with those requirements but if it is not so fixed it must be fixed in the manner required by paragraph (5).

(4) Except as provided in paragraph (3) the plate must be fixed in the manner required by paragraph (5).

(5) This paragraph requires the plate to be fixed—

- (a) vertically or, where that is not reasonably practicable, in a position as close to the vertical as is reasonably practicable, and
- (b) in such a position that in normal daylight the characters of the registration mark are easily distinguishable from every part of a relevant area having the diagonal length specified in paragraph (6).

(6) The diagonal length of the relevant area is—

- (a) in the case of a mark having characters the width of which is at least 57 millimetres, 22 metres,
- (b) in the case of a mark having characters the width of which is 50 millimetres, 21.5 metres,
- (c) in the case of a mark having characters the width of which is 44 millimetres, 18 metres.

Fixing of front registration plates: vehicles registered on or after the relevant date

6.—(1) This regulation applies to vehicles, other than works trucks, road rollers and agricultural machines, first registered on or after the relevant date.

(2) Except as provided in paragraph (5), a registration plate must be fixed on the front of the vehicle in the manner required by paragraph (3).

(3) This paragraph requires the plate to be fixed—

- (a) vertically or, where that is not reasonably practicable, in a position as close to the vertical as is reasonably practicable,
- (b) in such a position that in normal daylight the characters of the registration mark are easily distinguishable from every part of a relevant area having the diagonal length specified in paragraph (4).

(4) The diagonal length of the relevant area is—

- (a) in the case of a mark having characters the width of which is at least 57 millimetres, 22 metres,
- (b) in the case of a mark having characters the width of which is 50 millimetres, 21.5 metres,
- (c) in the case of a mark having characters the width of which is 44 millimetres, 18 metres.

(5) In the case of a motor cycle or a motor tricycle which does not have a body of a type which is characteristic of the body of a four-wheeled vehicle—

- (a) a registration plate must not be fixed on the front of a vehicle if it was first registered on or after 1st September 2001,

- (b) a plate need not be fixed on the front of the vehicle if it was first registered before 1st September 2001.

Fixing of registration plates: vehicles registered before the relevant date

7.—(1) This regulation applies to vehicles, other than works trucks, road rollers and agricultural machines, first registered before the relevant date.

(2) Except as provided in paragraph (4), a registration plate must be fixed in the manner required by paragraph (3) on—

- (a) the front of the vehicle, and
- (b) the rear of—
 - (i) the vehicle or,
 - (ii) where the vehicle is towing a trailer, the trailer or,
 - (iii) where the vehicle is towing more than one trailer, the rearmost trailer.

(3) This paragraph requires each plate to be fixed—

- (a) in a vertical position or, where that is not possible, in a position as close to the vertical as is reasonably practicable, and
- (b) in such a position that in normal daylight the characters of the registration mark are easily distinguishable, in the case of a plate fixed on the front of the vehicle, from in front of the vehicle and, in the case of a plate fixed on the rear of the vehicle or trailer, from behind the vehicle or trailer.

(4) In the case of a motor cycle and a motor tricycle which does not have a body of a type which is characteristic of the body of a four-wheeled vehicle, a registration plate need not be fixed on the front of the vehicle.

Fixing of registration plates: works trucks, road rollers and agricultural machines

8.—(1) This regulation applies to works trucks, road rollers and agricultural machines.

(2) A registration plate must be fixed on the vehicle in a vertical position or, where that is not possible, in a position as close to the vertical as is reasonably practicable—

- (a) on both sides of the vehicles, so that the characters of the mark are easily distinguishable from both sides of the vehicle, or
- (b) on the rear of the vehicle, so that the characters of the mark are easily distinguishable from behind the vehicle, or
- (c) where the vehicle is towing a trailer or trailers and the plate is not fixed on the sides of the vehicle, on the trailer or the rearmost trailer (as the case may be) so that the characters of the mark are easily distinguishable from behind the trailer.

(3) Where the towing vehicle is an agricultural machine, a plate fixed on the trailer may, instead of displaying the registration mark of the towing vehicle, display the mark of any other agricultural machine kept by the keeper of the towing vehicle.

Lighting of rear registration plates

9.—(1) This regulation applies to vehicles other than—

- (a) works trucks,
- (b) road rollers,
- (c) agricultural machines, and

(d) vehicles first registered before the relevant date.

(2) Where the vehicle is being used on a road between sunset and sunrise the registration plate fixed on the rear of—

- (a) the vehicle, or
- (b) where the vehicle is towing a trailer, the trailer or,
- (c) where the vehicle is towing more than one trailer, the rearmost trailer,

must be lit in accordance with this regulation.

(3) Where a vehicle (or, in a case where the plate is required to be fixed on a trailer, that trailer) has been constructed so as to satisfy the requirements of the relevant type-approval directive, whether or not it is required by law to satisfy them, that plate may be lit by a lamp which complies with those requirements but if it is not so lit it must be lit in the manner required by paragraph (5).

(4) Except as provided in paragraph (3) that plate must be lit in the manner required by paragraph (5).

(5) This paragraph requires the plate to be lit so that it is easily distinguishable from every part of a relevant area having a diagonal length—

- (a) in the case of a plate displaying a mark having characters with a width of 44 millimetres, of 15 metres, and
- (b) in any other case, of 18 metres.

Specifications for registration plates

10.—(1) A registration mark must be displayed on a registration plate conforming to the requirements prescribed by this regulation.

(2) In the case of a vehicle first registered on or after 1st September 2001 the registration plate must conform to the requirements set out in Part 1 of Schedule 2.

(3) Subject to paragraph (4), in the case of a vehicle first registered on or after 1st January 1973 but before 1st September 2001 the registration plate must conform either to the requirements set out in Part 2 of Schedule 2 or to the requirements set out in Part 1 of that Schedule.

(4) Where on or after 1st September 2001 a new registration plate is fixed to a vehicle to which paragraph (3) applies to replace a plate previously fixed thereto, the plate must conform to the requirements set out in Part 1 of Schedule 2.

(5) In the case of a vehicle first registered before 1st January 1973, the registration plate must conform either to one of the requirements set out in Part 3 of Schedule 2 or to the requirements set out in Part 2 of that Schedule or to the requirements set out in Part 1 of that Schedule.

(6) The corners of a registration plate may be rounded off provided that the requirements of regulation 14(9) (margins around registration marks) are not thereby infringed.

Further requirements for registration plates

11.—(1) No reflex-reflecting material may be applied to any part of a registration plate and the plate must not be treated in such a way that the characters of the registration mark become, or are caused to act as, retroreflective characters.

(2) A registration plate must not be treated in any other way which renders the characters of the registration mark less easily distinguishable to the eye or which would prevent or impair the making of a true photographic image of the plate through the medium of camera and film or any other device.

(3) A registration plate must not be fixed to a vehicle—

- (a) by means of a screw, bolt or other fixing device of any type or colour,

- (b) by the placing of a screw, bolt or other fixing device in any position, or
- (c) in any other manner,

which has the effect of changing the appearance or legibility of any of the characters of the registration mark, which renders the characters of the registration mark less easily distinguishable to the eye or which prevents or impairs the making of a true photographic image of the plate through the medium of camera and film or any other device.

(4) Section 59(2)(a) of the Act (regulations the contravention of which attracts a level 3 fine) applies to paragraphs (1), (2) and (3) of this regulation.