



Road Traffic Act 1972

1972 CHAPTER 20

PART II

CONSTRUCTION AND USE OF VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT

Provisions as to lighting of vehicles

68 Obligatory front and rear lamps and headlamps

- (1) Subject to the following provisions of this Part of this Act and of any regulations made thereunder by the Secretary of State, every vehicle on a road shall, without prejudice to the requirements of subsection (2) below, during the hours of darkness carry—
 - (a) two lamps, each showing to the front a white light visible from a reasonable distance ; and
 - (b) two lamps, each showing to the rear a red light visible from a reasonable distance.
- (2) Subject as aforesaid, every vehicle on a road, being a vehicle of any such class as may be prescribed, shall carry such lamps or lamp designed to illuminate the road as may be prescribed in relation to vehicles of that class.
- (3) Regulations under subsection (2) above may make different provision in relation to vehicles of different classes or in relation to vehicles of any class when used in different circumstances.
- (4) The lamps carried by a vehicle in pursuance of this section shall be kept lit—
 - (a) in the case of a lamp carried in pursuance of subsection (1) above, while the vehicle is on a road during the hours of darkness;
 - (b) in the case of a lamp carried in pursuance of subsection (2) above, in such circumstances when the vehicle is in motion on a road during the hours of darkness as may be prescribed.
- (5) The lamps carried by a vehicle in pursuance of subsections (1) and (2) above shall comply with such conditions as may be prescribed and shall, while the vehicle is on

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a road during the hours of darkness, be attached to the vehicle in such position and manner as may be prescribed.

- (6) The lamps carried by a vehicle in pursuance of subsection (1) above shall, while the vehicle is on a road during the hours of darkness, be kept properly trimmed and in a clean and efficient condition.
- (7) It shall be the duty of any person who causes or permits a vehicle to be on any road during the hours of darkness to provide the vehicle with lamps in accordance with the requirements of this and the following sections of this Part of this Act and of any regulations made under those sections (other than section 79).
- (8) In this and the following sections of this Part of this Act, " vehicle ", unless the context otherwise requires, means a vehicle of any description and includes a machine or implement of any kind drawn or propelled along roads whether by animal or mechanical power.

69 Obligatory reflectors

- (1) Subject to the following provisions of this Part of this Act, every vehicle on a road shall during the hours of darkness carry attached to it two unobscured and efficient red reflectors each facing to the rear.
- (2) It shall be the duty of any person who causes or permits a vehicle to be on any road during the hours of darkness to provide the vehicle with reflectors in accordance with the requirements of this section and any regulations made for the purposes thereof under the following provisions of this Part of this Act.

70 Restriction on the nature of the lamps to be carried

- (1) No vehicle shall, subject to the provisions of section 79 of this Act and of any regulations made under section 78(5) thereof, show—
 - (a) a red light to the front, or
 - (b) any light to the rear, other than a red light or a white light for the purpose of reversing.
- (2) Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) above shall not prevent a vehicle from carrying a lamp showing a light to the rear for the purposes of—
 - (a) the internal illumination of the vehicle, or
 - (b) (subject to subsection (3) below) illuminating a number plate, taxi meter, or any device for giving signals to overtaking traffic, or
 - (c) in the case of a public passenger vehicle, illuminating boards, plates or devices indicating the route or destination of the vehicle ;

and the said paragraph (b) shall not prevent a bicycle or tricycle from carrying amber coloured reflectors which are attached to or incorporated in or form part of the pedals of the bicycle or tricycle notwithstanding that any such reflectors show a light to the rear.
- (3) Subsection (2)(b) above shall not authorise a vehicle of any class to carry a lamp showing a light to the rear for the purpose of illuminating any device for giving signals to overtaking traffic other than a device of a type required or authorised to be carried on a vehicle of that class by virtue of section 40 of this Act.

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71 Restriction on movement of lamps

- (1) Unless otherwise provided by the Secretary of State by regulation, and subject to subsection (2) below, no light shown by a vehicle, other than a dipping headlight, shall be moved by swivelling, deflecting or otherwise while the vehicle is in motion.
- (2) Subsection (1) above shall not apply to amber coloured reflectors which are attached to or incorporated in or form part of the pedals of a bicycle or tricycle.

72 Multi-purpose lamps and combined lamps and reflectors

- (1) Subject to subsection (2) below, nothing in sections 68 to 78 of this Act shall require a vehicle to carry separate lamps for different purposes, if it carries a lamp satisfying all the requirements which would be applicable to separate lamps carried by it for those purposes.
- (2) Subsection (1) above shall not apply in relation to any requirement to carry a headlamp under section 68(2) of this Act, but regulations may authorise the combination in a single unit of such a lamp and a lamp required to be carried by section 68(1)(a) of this Act.
- (3) Where a vehicle's tail lamp is so constructed that, when not showing a light, it is an efficient red reflector facing to the rear and complying with any regulations made for the purposes of section 69 of this Act and for the purposes of this subsection which apply to the vehicle, it shall be treated for those purposes as being such a reflector when it is, as well as when it is not, showing a light.

73 Regulation of position, character, use, etc., of lamps and reflectors

- (1) The Secretary of State may by regulations prescribe the conditions to be complied with by any of the following lamps carried by a vehicle, namely—
 - (a) any lamp showing a light to the front;
 - (b) any lamp showing a white light to the rear for the purpose of reversing ; and
 - (c) any lamp carried in pursuance of any of the provisions of sections. 68 to 78 of this Act or of any regulations made thereunder and showing a red light to the rear;and, without prejudice to the foregoing, the conditions subject to which the lamps described in paragraphs (a) and (b) above may be used.
- (2) Regulations under subsection (1) above may make different provision in relation to vehicles of different classes or in relation to vehicles of the same class in different circumstances.
- (3) The conditions which may be prescribed by regulations under subsection (1) above as conditions to be complied with by any lamp shall include conditions with respect to—
 - (a) position and manner of attachment to the vehicle;
 - (b) power, intensity, colour and angle of projection of light;
 - (c) height, width and range of illumination of beam;
 - (d) provision for obscuration or deflection of light or beam ;and such regulations may provide for the method by which the height, width or range of illumination of a beam is to be ascertained.

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- (4) Regulations under subsection (1) above may make special provision, in relation to any class of vehicle, as to the position in which a lamp carried for the purposes both of paragraph (a) and of paragraph (b) of section 68(1) of this Act is to be attached; and in a case for which special provision is so made the reference in section 72(1) of this Act to the requirements which would be applicable to separate lamps shall not include the requirements of any regulations as to the position of a separate lamp carried for the purposes of the said paragraph (a) or (b).
- (5) The Secretary of State may by regulations prescribe the conditions to be complied with by any reflector carried in pursuance of any of the provisions of sections 69 to 78 of this Act or of any regulations made thereunder, and the position and manner in which it is to be attached; and any regulations made under this subsection may make different provision in relation to vehicles of different classes or in relation to vehicles of the same class in different circumstances.

74 Bicycles, tricycles and invalid carriages

In the application of sections 68 to 73 of this Act (except so far as those sections relate to any head lamps required to be carried under section 68(2) thereof) to bicycles, tricycles and invalid carriages the following modifications shall apply:—

- (a) in the case of a bicycle not having a side-car attached thereto, whether propelled by mechanical power or not, or of a tricycle not propelled by mechanical power, or of an invalid carriage, only a single lamp showing a white light to the front instead of two such lamps need be carried ;
- (b) in the case of a bicycle or tricycle not propelled by mechanical power, or of a bicycle propelled by mechanical power and not having a side-car attached thereto—
- (i) only a single lamp showing a red light to the rear instead of two such lamps, and
 - (ii) only a single red reflector instead of two such reflectors,
- need be carried;
- (c) in the case of a bicycle not having a side-car attached thereto, whether propelled by mechanical power or not, or of a tricycle not propelled by mechanical power, no lamp need be carried if the bicycle or tricycle is being wheeled by a person on foot as near as possible to the near or left hand edge of the carriageway;
- (d) in the case of a bicycle or tricycle not propelled by mechanical power, no light required by the said sections 68 to 73 need be shown, if the bicycle or tricycle is stationary owing to the exigencies of the traffic or in order to comply with any traffic signal or direction, and the bicycle or tricycle is as near as possible to the near or left hand edge of the carriageway:

Provided that the provisions of paragraph (d) above shall have effect only until such day as the Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument appoint.

75 Horse-drawn agricultural vehicles

- (1) In the application of sections 68 to 73 of this Act (except so far as those sections relate to any head lamps required to be carried under section 68(2) thereof) to vehicles drawn by horses or other animals the following modifications shall apply:—

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- (a) any vehicle engaged for the time being in carrying agricultural produce of an inflammable nature in the course of the internal operations of a farm shall be exempted from carrying lamps ;
 - (b) without prejudice to paragraph (a) above, in the case of an agricultural implement or of any vehicle used for the time being by a person engaged in agriculture for the conveyance of his agricultural produce or articles required by him for use in agriculture—
 - (i) only one lamp showing a light to the front need be carried, and that lamp shall be attached to the off or right hand side of the vehicle, and
 - (ii) subject to the provisions of section 76 of this Act, a lamp showing a red light to the rear need not be carried.
- (2) In this section " agriculture " includes the use of land as meadow land or pasture land, or orchard land or for market gardens or allotments, but does not include the use of land as woodlands, and " agricultural" shall be construed accordingly.

76 Vehicles carrying overhanging or projecting loads

- (1) Without prejudice to sections 68 to 75 of this Act, where a vehicle on a road during the hours of darkness carries a load overhanging laterally on any side more than twelve inches from the centre of the outermost of the lamps showing a white light to the front on that side, the vehicle shall carry, in substitution for or in addition to that lamp, a lamp showing to the front a white light visible from a reasonable distance and in such a position that no part of the load overhangs laterally more than twelve inches beyond a vertical line through the centre of the substituted or additional lamp.
- (2) Subject to subsection (3) below, where a vehicle on a road during the hours of darkness carries a load projecting to the rear more than three and a half feet behind its tail lamp, the vehicle shall carry a rear lamp in such a position that no part of the load projects to the rear more than three and a half feet behind that rear lamp.

In this section " rear lamp " means a lamp showing to the rear a red light visible from a reasonable distance.

- (3) The Secretary of State may by regulations direct that in relation to vehicles of any prescribed class subsection (2) above shall have effect with the substitution, for references to three and a half feet, of references to such longer distance, not being more than six feet, as may be prescribed in respect of vehicles of that class.
- (4) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that, subject to any prescribed exceptions, where a vehicle on a road during the hours of darkness carries a load overhanging laterally by more than the prescribed distance (measured from such point as may be specified in the regulations), the vehicle shall carry a rear lamp in the prescribed position to indicate the overhang; and any such regulations may apply to a vehicle otherwise exempted from carrying a rear lamp by section 77 of this Act.
- (5) Every rear lamp carried in pursuance of this section or regulations made under it shall comply with the prescribed conditions and shall, subject to subsection (6) below, be carried in addition to the tail lamp.
- (6) The Secretary of State may by regulations exempt a vehicle carrying a rear lamp in pursuance of this section from carrying a tail lamp or from carrying two tail lamps.
- (7) Nothing in section 75(1)(b) of this Act shall exempt any implement or vehicle to which that paragraph applies from complying with subsections (2) to (5) above or

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any regulations made under them, but in relation to any such implement or vehicle a reference to the red reflectors required by section 69(1) of this Act shall be substituted for the reference in subsection (2) above to the tail lamp.

77 Vehicles towing and being towed

- (1) In the application of sections 68 to 76 of this Act (except so far as those sections relate to any head lamps required to be carried under section 68(2) thereof) in the case of a vehicle drawing one or more vehicles the following modifications shall, subject to the following provisions of this section, apply:—
 - (a) lamps showing lights to the front need not be carried on any vehicle being drawn;
 - (b) lamps showing red lights to the rear need not be carried on any of the vehicles except the rearmost vehicle;
 - (c) reflectors facing to the rear need not be carried on any of the vehicles except the rearmost vehicle or a vehicle more than five feet from the vehicle behind it.
- (2) If the distance between any two of the vehicles exceeds five feet, then as respects any light to be shown to the rear the foremost of the two vehicles, and as respects any light to be shown to the front the rearmost of the two vehicles, shall be required to carry the same lamps as if the one were not drawing the other.
- (3) If a vehicle being drawn or any load carried thereon projects laterally on any side more than twelve inches beyond the outermost of the lamps showing a white light to the front on that side carried by the vehicle by which it is being drawn or by any preceding vehicle which is also being drawn by the same vehicle, the first-mentioned vehicle shall carry on the side on which the vehicle or its load so projects a lamp showing to the front a white light visible from a reasonable distance in such a position that no part of the vehicle or its load projects laterally more than twelve inches beyond a vertical line through the centre of the lamp required to be carried by this subsection.
- (4) This section shall have effect subject to the provisions of any regulations made under section 76(4) of this Act in the case of any vehicles to which those regulations apply.
- (5) For the purposes of this section, the distance between two vehicles shall be measured between the nearest points of those vehicles, disregarding the drawbar and any fitting for its attachment.

78 Power of exemption and variation of requirements

- (1) The Secretary of State may by regulations exempt either wholly or partly from any of the requirements of sections 68 to 77 of this Act—
 - (a) vehicles while carrying inflammable or explosive goods of a nature specified in the regulations, or when in a place where inflammable or explosive material of a nature so specified is handled or stored, if an application is made for the purpose by any body which in the opinion of the Secretary of State is a body proper to make such an application ;
 - (b) any vehicles used for naval, military or air force purposes;
 - (c) vehicles standing or parked on any road with respect to which a speed limit on the driving of mechanically propelled vehicles is in force by virtue of any enactment, or on any road verge or in any parking place or any stand for hackney carriages;
 - (d) vehicles drawn or propelled by hand.

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- (2) The Secretary of State may by regulations add to or vary the requirements of the said sections 68 to 77, and require or permit distinctive lamps to be carried displaying lights of such colour and used under such conditions as may be prescribed, in the case of—
 - (a) vehicles used as public passenger vehicles or any class thereof or as hackney carriages;
 - (b) vehicles used for naval, military, air force or police purposes, or as ambulances, or for any other special purposes mentioned in the regulations ;and where distinctive lamps are so required or permitted, prohibit similar lamps being carried by any other vehicles.
- (3) The Secretary of State may by regulations increase, in relation to vehicles of any class specified in the regulations, the number of tail lamps required by section 68(1)(b) of this Act.
- (4) Regulations made under subsection (3) above may make different provision in relation to vehicles of different classes or in relation to vehicles of any class when used in different circumstances; and any such regulations may modify the provisions of section 74 of this Act so far as it relates to the tail lamps of vehicles to which the regulations apply.
- (5) The Secretary of State may, notwithstanding anything in section 70 of this Act, by regulations make provision—
 - (a) requiring or authorising a light of a prescribed colour to be shown by the prescribed means to the rear of a vehicle of any prescribed class; and
 - (b) where any such light is required or authorised by the regulations to be so shown by means of reflecting or fluorescent material, provision imposing conditions with respect to the material, its position and dimensions.
- (6) Without prejudice to the powers conferred by the foregoing provisions of this section, the Secretary of State may by regulations exempt, either wholly or partly, from the requirements of section 69 of this Act, vehicles of any particular class.
- (7) Regulations under any of the provisions of sections 68 to 77 of this Act or this section granting exemptions from any of the requirements thereof—
 - (a) may grant exemptions from any such requirement in such cases as may be specified in the regulations and subject to such conditions as may be specified in or under the regulations ; and
 - (b) may make different provisions as respects different areas, as respects different classes of vehicles or as respects the same class of vehicles in different circumstances.

79 Power to impose additional requirements for vehicles over prescribed length and trailers

- (1) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that, subject to any exemptions prescribed by the regulations,—
 - (a) where the length of a vehicle, or the overall length of two or more vehicles of which one is drawing the other or others, inclusive of any load on the vehicle or vehicles, exceeds a length so prescribed, the vehicle or vehicles shall when on a road during the hours of darkness carry such lamps or reflectors each showing a light, or as the case may be facing, to the side as may be so prescribed;

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(b) a vehicle constructed or adapted so as to be drawn by another vehicle shall when on a road during the hours of darkness carry such lamps each showing a light to the front or the side, or both, as may be prescribed;

and any such regulations may prescribe the conditions with which lamps or reflectors carried on a vehicle in pursuance of the regulations must comply and the position and manner in which they are to be attached, and may make different provision in respect of vehicles of different classes or in respect of vehicles of the same class in different circumstances.

(2) Any lamps or reflectors required to be carried by virtue of this section shall be carried in addition to, and not instead of, those required to be carried by or by virtue of the provisions of sections 68 to 78 of this Act, and accordingly any such lamps or reflectors shall for the purposes of those provisions, and in particular section 70 of this Act, be treated as not showing a light to the front or to the rear.

80 Application of ss.68 to 79 to reflecting material

It is hereby declared for the avoidance of doubt that material designed primarily to reflect white light as light of that or another colour is, when reflecting light, to be treated for the purposes of sections 68 to 79 of this Act as showing a light, and material capable of reflecting an image is not, when reflecting the image of a light, to be so treated.

81 Offences

(1) If any person causes or permits any vehicle to be on any road in contravention of any of the provisions of sections 68 to 79 of this Act or of regulations made thereunder or otherwise fails to comply with any of those provisions he shall be guilty of an offence:

Provided that it shall be a defence for a person driving or being in charge of a vehicle who is charged with an offence under this subsection to prove to the satisfaction of the court that the offence arose through the negligence or default of some other person whose duty it was to provide the vehicle with any lamp or reflector.

(2) If any person sells, or offers or exposes for sale, any appliance adapted for use as a reflector or tail lamp to be carried on a vehicle in accordance with the provisions of this Act or of any regulations made thereunder, not being an appliance which complies with the conditions prescribed under sections 68 to 79 of this Act for a class of vehicles for which the appliance is adapted, he shall be guilty of an offence.